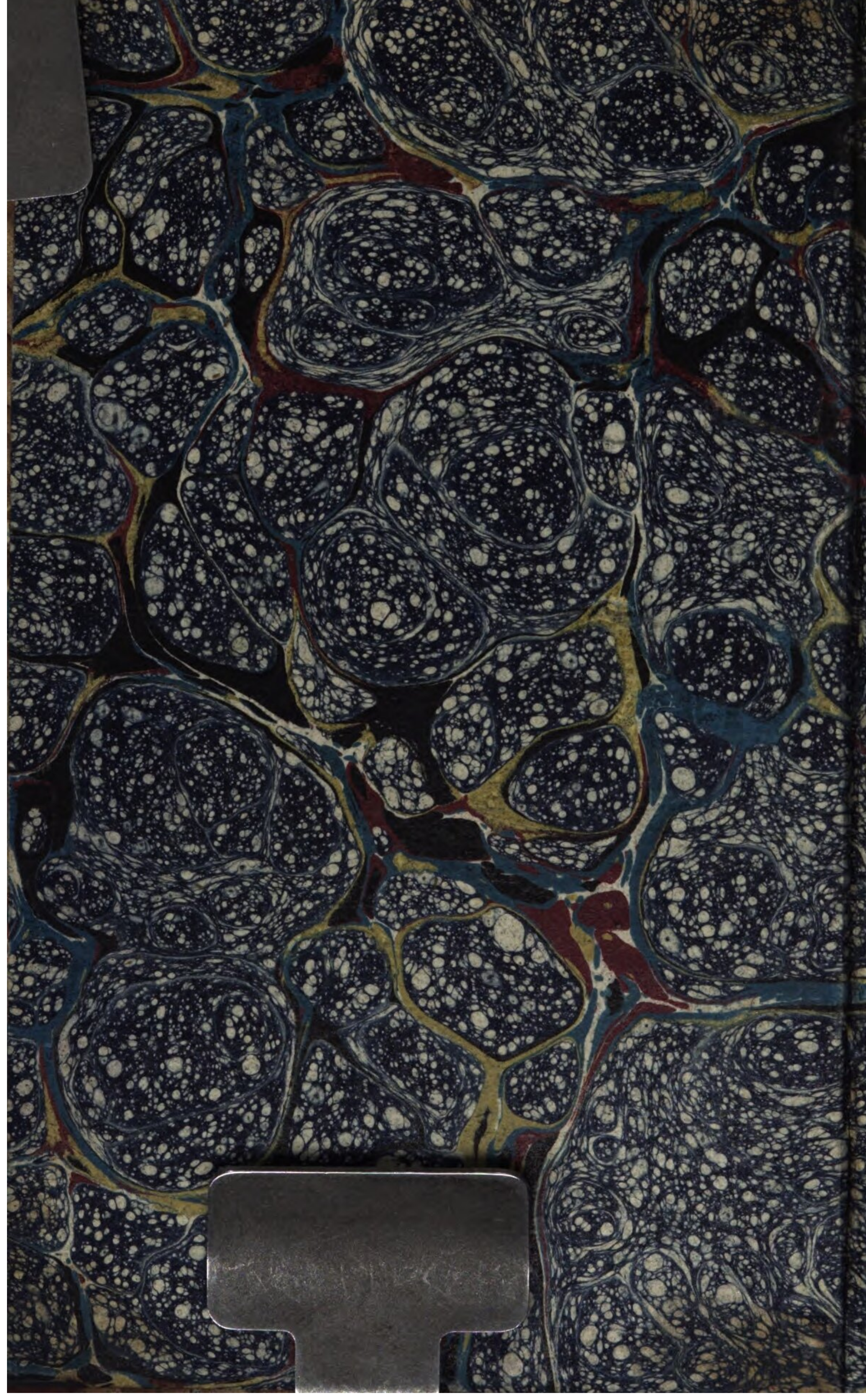
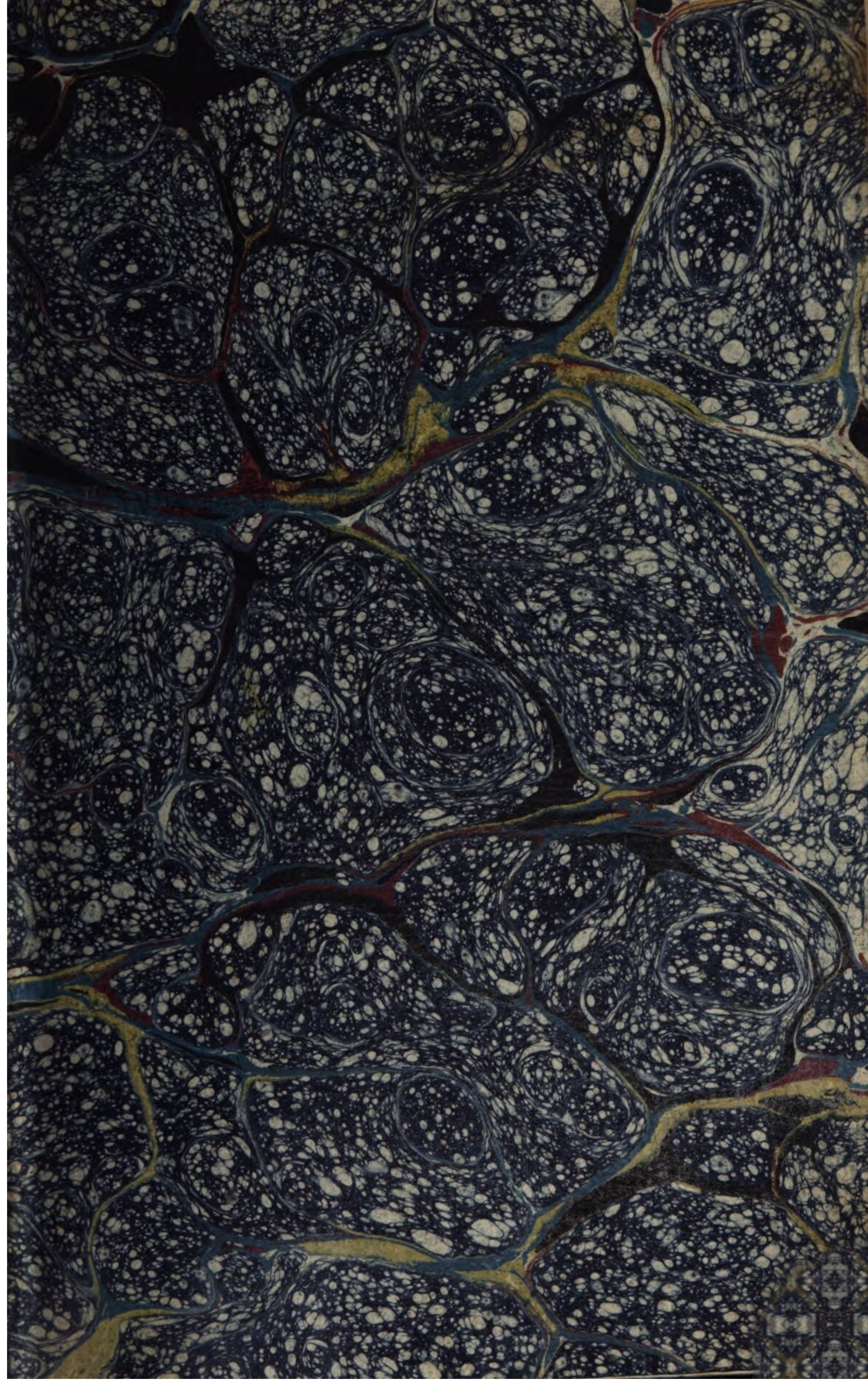








J. O. Angl

84 2 - 3

WORKS
OF
THE REV. GEORGE CRABBE.

<36631623900018

<36631623900018

Bayer. Staatsbibliothek

NO. 2

THE NEW GEORGE CRABBE

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

THE

OF

THE REV. GEORGE CRABBE.

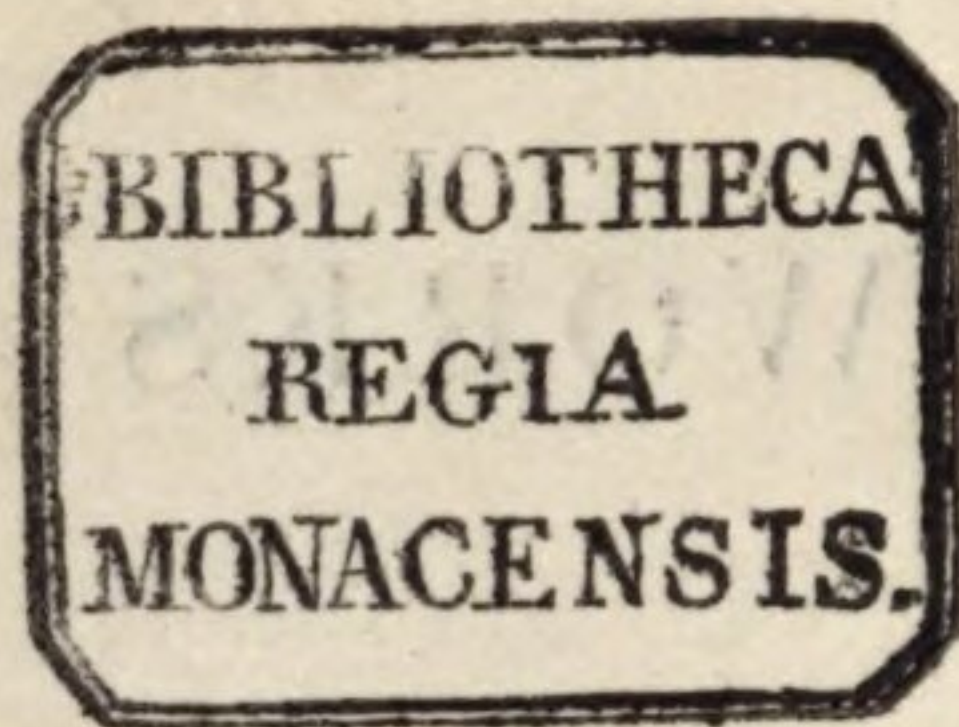
IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1823.



CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

Letter	Page
12. Players	1
13. The Alms-House and Trustees	19
14. Inhabitants of the Alms-House—Blaney	35
15. Inhabitants of the Alms-House—Clelia	47
16. Inhabitants of the Alms-House—Benbow	59
17. The Hospital and Governors	71
18. The Poor and their Dwellings	85
19. The Poor of the Borough—The Parish Clerk	105
20. The Poor of the Borough—Ellen Orford	119
21. The Poor of the Borough—Abel Keene	137
22. The Poor of the Borough—Peter Grimes	155
23. Prisons	173
24. Schools	189

CONTENTS OF VOLUME

1	12
10	21
20	30
30	40
40	50
50	60
60	70
70	80
80	90
90	100
100	110
110	120
120	130
130	140
140	150

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER III.

PLAYS.

THE BOROUGH.

THE BOROUGH

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XII.

PLAYERS.

These are monarchs none respect,
Heroes, yet an humbled crew,
Nobles, whom the crowd correct,
Wealthy men, whom duns pursue;
Beauties, shrinking from the view
Of the day's detecting eye;
Lovers, who with much ado
Long-forsaken damsels woo,
And heave the ill-feign'd sigh.

These are misers, craving means
Of existence through the day,
Famous scholars, conning scenes
Of a dull bewildering play;
Ragged beaux and misses grey
Whom the rabble praise and blame;
Proud and mean, and sad and gay,
Toiling after ease, are they,
Infamous*, and boasting fame.

* Strolling players are thus held in a legal sense.

They arrive in the Borough—Welcomed by their former Friends—Are better fitted for Comic than Tragic Scenes: yet better approved in the latter by one Part of their Audience—Their general Character and Pleasantry—Particular Distresses and Labours—Their Fortitude and Patience—A private Rehearsal—The Vanity of the aged Actress—A Heroine from the Milliner's Shop—A deluded Tradesman—Of what Persons the Company is composed—Character and Adventures of Frederick Thompson.

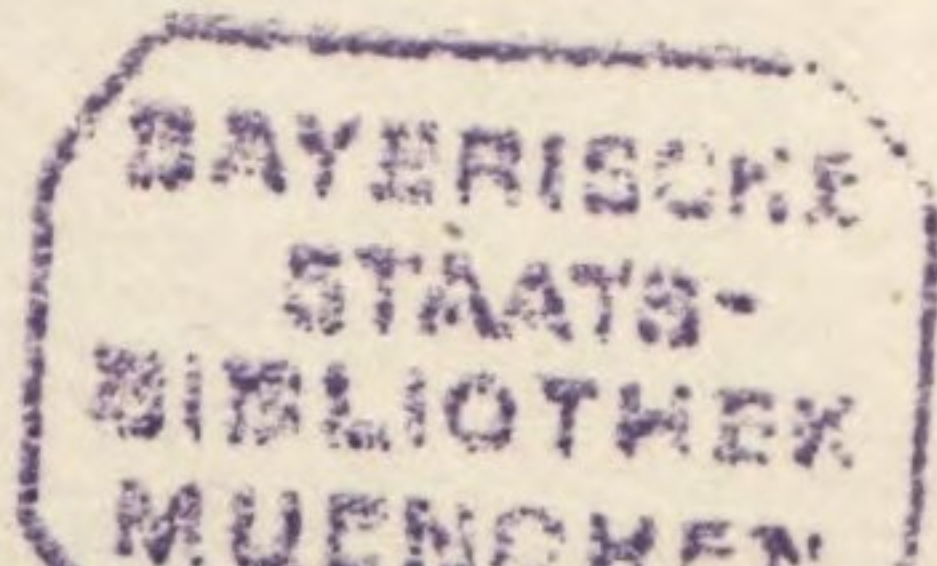
THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XII.

PLAYERS.

DRAWN by the annual call, we now behold
Our troop dramatic, heroes known of old,
And those, since last they march'd, inlisted and enroll'd:
Mounted on hacks or borne in waggons some,
The rest on foot (the humbler brethren) come.
Three favour'd places, an unequal time,
Join to support this company sublime:
Ours for the longer period—see how light
Yon parties move, their former friends in sight,
Whose claims are all allow'd, and friendship glads the
night.

Now public rooms shall sound with words divine,
And private lodgings hear how heroes shine;
No talk of pay shall yet on pleasure steal,
But kindest welcome bless the friendly meal;



While o'er the social jug and decent cheer,
Shall be described the fortunes of the year.

Peruse these bills, and see what each can do,—
Behold! the prince, the slave, the monk, the Jew;
Change but the garment, and they'll all engage
To take each part, and act in every age:
Cull'd from all houses, what a house are they!
Swept from all barns, our borough-critics say;
But with some portion of a critic's ire,
We all endure them; there are some admire:
They might have praise, confined to farce alone;
Full well they grin, they should not try to groan;
But then our servants' and our seamen's wives
Love all that rant and rapture as their lives;
He who 'Squire Richard's part could well sustain,
Finds as King Richard he must roar amain—
“My horse! my horse!”—Lo! now to their abodes,
Come lords and lovers, empresses and gods.
The master-mover of these scenes has made
No trifling gain in this adventurous trade;
Trade we may term it, for he duly buys
Arms out of use and undirected eyes;
These he instructs, and guides them as he can,
And vends each night the manufactured man:
Long as our custom lasts, they gladly stay,
Then strike their tents, like Tartars! and away!

The place grows bare where they too long remain,
But grass will rise ere they return again.

Children of Thespis, welcome! knights and queens!
Counts! barons! beauties! when before your scenes,
And mighty monarchs thund'ring from your throne;
Then step behind, and all your glory's gone:
Of crown and palace, throne and guards bereft,
The pomp is vanish'd, and the care is left.
Yet strong and lively is the joy they feel,
When the full house secures the plenteous meal;
Flatt'ring and flatter'd, each attempts to raise
A brother's merits for a brother's praise:
For never hero shows a prouder heart,
Than he who proudly acts a hero's part;
Nor without cause; the boards, we know, can yield
Place for fierce contest, like the tented field.

Graceful to tread the stage, to be in turn
The prince we honour, and the knave we spurn;
Bravely to bear the tumult of the crowd,
The hiss tremendous, and the censure loud:
These are their parts,—and he who these sustains,
Deserves some praise and profit for his pains.
Heroes at least of gentler kind are they,
Against whose swords no weeping widows pray,
No blood their fury sheds, nor havoc marks their way.

Sad happy race! soon raised and soon depress'd,
Your days all pass'd in jeopardy and jest;

Poor without prudence, with afflictions vain,
Not warn'd by misery, not enrich'd by gain;
Whom justice pitying, chides from place to place,
A wandering, careless, wretched, merry race,
Who cheerful looks assume, and play the parts
Of happy Rovers with repining hearts;
Then cast off care, and in the mimic pain
Of tragic wo, feel spirits light and vain,
Distress and hope—the mind's, the body's wear,
The man's affliction, and the actor's tear:
Alternate times of fasting and excess
Are yours, ye smiling children of distress.

Slaves though ye be, your wandering freedom seems,
And with your varying views and restless schemes,
Your griefs are transient, as your joys are dreams.

Yet keen those griefs—ah! what avail thy charms,
Fair Juliet! what that infant in thine arms;
What those heroic lines thy patience learns,
What all the aid thy present Romeo earns,
Whilst thou art crowded in that lumbering wain,
With all thy plaintive sisters to complain?

Nor is there lack of labour—To rehearse,
Day after day, poor scraps of prose and verse;
To bear each other's spirit, pride, and spite;
To hide in rant the heart-ache of the night;
To dress in gaudy patch-work, and to force
The mind to think on the appointed course;—

This is laborious, and may be defined
The bootless labour of the thriftless mind.

There is a veteran dame; I see her stand
Intent and pensive with her book in hand;
Awhile her thoughts she forces on her part,
Then dwells on objects nearer to the heart;
Across the room she paces, gets her tone,
And fits her features for the Danish throne;
To-night a queen—I mark her motion slow,
I hear her speech, and Hamlet's mother know.

Methinks 'tis pitiful to see her try
For strength of arms and energy of eye;
With vigour lost, and spirits worn away,
Her pomp and pride she labours to display;
And when awhile she's tried her part to act,
To find her thoughts arrested by some fact;
When struggles more and more severe are seen,
In the plain actress than the Danish queen,—
At length she feels her part, she finds delight,
And fancies all the plaudits of the night:
Old as she is, she smiles at every speech,
And thinks no youthful part beyond her reach;
But as the mist of vanity again
Is blown away, by press of present pain,
Sad and in doubt she to her purse applies
For cause of comfort, where no comfort lies;

Then to her task she sighing turns again,—

“ Oh ! Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain ! ”

And who that poor, consumptive, wither'd thing,
Who strains her slender throat and strives to sing?
Panting for breath, and forced her voice to drop,
And far unlike the inmate of the shop,
Where she, in youth and health, alert and gay,
Laugh'd off at night the labours of the day ;
With novels, verses, fancy's fertile powers,
And sister-converse pass'd the evening-hours ;
But Cynthia's soul was soft, her wishes strong,
Her judgment weak, and her conclusions wrong :
'The morning-call and counter were her dread,
And her contempt the needle and the thread :
But when she read a gentle damsel's part,
Her wo, her wish !—she had them all by heart.

At length the hero of the boards drew nigh,
Who spake of love till sigh re-echo'd sigh ;
He told in honey'd words his deathless flame,
And she his own by tender vows became ;
Nor ring nor licence needed souls so fond,
Alphonso's passion was his Cynthia's bond :
And thus the simple girl, to shame betray'd,
Sinks to the grave forsaken and dismay'd.

Sick without pity, sorrowing without hope,
See her ! the grief and scandal of the troop ;

A wretched martyr to a childish pride,
Her wo insulted, and her praise denied:
Her humble talents, though derided, used,
Her prospects lost, her confidence abused;
All that remains—for she not long can brave
Increase of evils—is an early grave.

Ye gentle Cynthias of the shop, take heed
What dreams ye cherish and what books ye read.

A decent sum had Peter Nottage made,
By joining bricks—to him a thriving trade:
Of his employment master and his wife,
This humble tradesman led a lordly life;
The house of kings and heroes lack'd repairs
And Peter, though reluctant, scrved the players:
Connected thus, he heard in way polite,—
“Come, Master Nottage, see us play to-night.”
At first 'twas folly, nonsense, idle stuff,
But seen for nothing it grew well enough;
And better now—now best, and every night,
In this fool's paradise he drank delight;
And as he felt the bliss, he wish'd to know
Whence all this rapture and these joys could flow;
For if the seeing could such pleasure bring,
What must the feeling?—feeling like a king?

In vain his wife, his uncle, and his friend,
Cried—“Peter! Peter! let such follies end;

“ 'Tis well enough these vagabonds to see,

“ But would you partner with a showman be?”

“ Showman!” said Peter, “ did not Quin and Clive,

“ And Roscius-Garrick, by the science thrive?

“ Showman!—’tis scandal; I’m by genius led

“ To join a class who’ve Shakspeare at their head.”

Poor Peter thus by easy steps became
A dreaming candidate for scenic fame,

And, after years consumed, infirm and poor,

He sits and takes the tickets at the door.

Of various men these marching troops are made,—

Pen-spurning clerks, and lads contemning trade;

Waiters and servants by confinement teased,

And youths of wealth by dissipation eased;

With feeling nymphs, who, such resource at hand,

Scorn to obey the rigour of command;

Some, who from higher views by vice are won,

And some of either sex by love undone;

The greater part lamenting as their fall,

What some an honour and advancement call.

There are who names in shame or fear assume,

And hence our Bevilles and our Savilles come;

It honours him, from tailor’s board kick’d down,

As Mister Dormer to amuse the town;

Falling, he rises: but a kind there are

Who dwell on former prospects, and despair;

Justly but vainly they their fate deplore,
And mourn their fall who fell to rise no more.

Our merchant Thompson, with his sons around,
Most mind and talent in his Frederick found :
He was so lively, that his mother knew,
If he were taught, that honour must ensue ;
The father's views were in a different line,
But if at college he were sure to shine,
Then should he go—to prosper who could doubt ?
When school-boy stigmas would be all wash'd out ;
For there were marks upon his youthful face,
'Twixt vice and error—a neglected case—
These would submit to skill ; a little time,
And none could trace the error or the crime ;
Then let him go, and once at college, he
Might choose his station—what would Frederick be ?

'Twas soon determined—He could not descend
To pedant-laws and lectures without end ;
And then the chapel—night and morn to pray,
Or mulct and threaten'd if he kept away ;
No ! not to be a bishop—so he swore,
And at his college he was seen no more.

His debts all paid, the father with a sigh,
Placed him in office—“ Do, my Frederick, try ;
“ Confine thyself a few short months, and then——”
He tried a fortnight, and threw down the pen.

Again demands were hush'd: "My son, you're free,
"But you're unsettled; take your chance at sea:"
So in few days the midshipman equipp'd,
Received the mother's blessing and was shipp'd.

Hard was her fortune! soon compell'd to meet
The wretched stripling staggering through the street;
For, rash, impetuous, insolent and vain,
The captain sent him to his friends again:
About the borough roved th'unhappy boy,
And ate the bread of every chance-employ;
Of friends he borrow'd, and the parents yet
In secret fondness authorised the debt;
The younger sister, still a child, was taught
To give with feign'd affright the pittance sought;
For now the father cried—"It is too late
"For trial more—I leave him to his fate,"—
Yet left him not; and with a kind of joy
The mother heard of her desponding boy:
At length he sicken'd, and he found, when sick,
All aid was ready, all attendance quick;
A fever seized him, and at once was lost
The thought of trespass, error, crime and cost;
Th'indulgent parents knelt beside the youth,
They heard his promise and believed his truth;
And when the danger lessen'd on their view,
They cast off doubt, and hope assurance grew;—

Nursed by his sisters, cherish'd by his sire,
Begg'd to be glad, encouraged to aspire,
His life, they said, would now all care repay,
And he might date his prospects from that day;
A son, a brother to his home received,
They hoped for all things, and in all believed.

And now will pardon, comfort, kindness, draw
The youth from vice? will honour, duty, law?
Alas! not all: the more the trials lent,
The less he seem'd to ponder and repent;
Headstrong, determined in his own career,
He thought reproof unjust and truth severe;
The soul's disease was to its crisis come,
He first abused and then abjured his home;
And when he chose a vagabond to be,
He made his shame his glory—"I'll be free."

Friends, parents, relatives, hope, reason, love,
With anxious ardour for that empire strove;
In vain their strife, in vain the means applied,
They had no comfort, but that all were tried;
One strong vain trial made, the mind to move,
Was the last effort of parental love.

Ev'n then he watch'd his father from his home,
And to his mother would for pity come,
Where, as he made her tender terrors rise,
He talk'd of death, and threaten'd for supplies.

Against a youth so vicious and undone,
All hearts were closed, and every door but one:
The players received him, they with open heart
Gave him his portion and assign'd his part;
And ere three days were added to his life,
He found a home, a duty, and a wife.

His present friends, though they were nothing nice,
Nor ask'd how vicious he, or what his vice,
Still they expected he should now attend
To the joint duty as an useful friend;
The leader too declared, with frown severe,
That none should pawn a robe that kings might wear;
And much it moved him, when he Hamlet play'd,
To see his Father's Ghost so drunken made:
Then too the temper, the unbending pride
Of this ally would no reproof abide:—
So leaving these, he march'd away and join'd
Another troop, and other goods purloin'd;
And other characters, both gay and sage,
Sober and sad, made stagger on the stage;
Then to rebuke, with arrogant disdain,
He gave abuse and sought a home again.

Thus changing scenes, but with unchanging vice,
Engaged by many, but with no one twice:
Of this, a last and poor resource, bereft,
He to himself, unhappy guide! was left—

And who shall say where guided? to what seats
Of starving villany? of thieves and cheats?

In that sad time of many a dismal scene
Had he a witness (not inactive) been;
Had leagued with petty pilferers, and had crept
Where of each sex degraded numbers slept:
With such associates he was long allied,
Where his capacity for ill was tried,
And that once lost, the wretch was cast aside:
For now, though willing with the worst to act,
He wanted powers for an important fact;
And while he felt as lawless spirits feel,
His hand was palsied, and he couldn't steal.

By these rejected, is there lot so strange,
So low! that he could suffer by the change?
Yes! the new station as a fall we judge,—
He now became the harlots' humble drudge,
Their drudge in common: they combined to save
Awhile from starving their submissive slave;
For now his spirit left him, and his pride,
His scorn, his rancour, and resentment died;
Few were his feelings—but the keenest these,
The rage of hunger, and the sigh for ease;
He who abused indulgence, now became
By want subservient and by misery tame;
A slave, he begg'd forbearance; bent with pain,
He shunn'd the blow,—“Ah! strike me not again.”

Thus was he found: the master of a hoy
Saw the sad wretch, whom he had known a boy ;
At first in doubt, but Frederick laid aside
All shame, and humbly for his aid applied:
He, tamed and smitten with the storms gone by,
Look'd for compassion through one living eye,
And stretch'd th' unpalsied hand: the seaman felt
His honest heart with gentle pity melt,
And his small boon with cheerful frankness dealt;
Then made inquiries of th' unhappy youth,
Who told, nor shame forbade him, all the truth.

“ Young Frederick Thompson to a chandler's shop
“ By harlots order'd and afraid to stop!—
“ What! our good merchant's favourite to be seen
“ In state so loathsome and in dress so mean?”—

So thought the seaman as he bade adieu,
And, when in port, related all he knew.

But time was lost, inquiry came too late,
Those whom he served knew nothing of his fate;
No! they had seized on what the sailor gave,
Nor bore resistance from their abject slave;
The spoil obtain'd, they cast him from the door,
Robb'd, beaten, hungry, pain'd, diseased and poor.

Then nature (pointing to the only spot
Which still had comfort for so dire a lot,)
Although so feeble, led him on the way,
And hope look'd forward to a happier day:

He thought, poor prodigal! a father yet
His woes would pity and his crimes forget;
Nor had he brother who with speech severe
Would check the pity or refrain the tear:
A lighter spirit in his bosom rose,
As near the road he sought an hour's repose.

And there he found it: he had left the town,
But buildings yet were scatter'd up and down;
To one of these, half-ruin'd and half-built,
Was traced this child of wretchedness and guilt;
There on the remnant of a beggar's vest,
Thrown by in scorn! the sufferer sought for rest;
There was this scene of vice and wo to close,
And there the wretched body found repose.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XIII.

THE ALMS-HOUSE AND TRUSTEES.

Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.

There are a sort of men whose visages
Do cream and mantle like a standing pool,
And do a wilful stillness entertain :
With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion,
As who should say, " I am Sir Oracle,
" And when I ope my lips let no dog bark."
Merchant of Venice.

Sum felix ; quis enim neget ? felixque manebo ;
Hoc quoque quis dubitet ? Tutum me copia fecit.

The frugal Merchant—Rivalship in Modes of Frugality—Private Exceptions to the general Manners—Alms-House built—Its Description—Founder dies—Six Trustees—Sir Denys Brand, a Principal—His Eulogium in the Chronicles of the Day—Truth reckoned invidious on these Occasions—An Explanation of the Magnanimity and Wisdom of Sir Denys—His Kinds of Moderation and Humility—Laughton, his Successor, a planning, ambitious, wealthy Man—Advancement in Life his perpetual Object, and all Things made the Means of it—His Idea of Falsehood—His Resentment dangerous: how removed—Success produces Love of Flattery; his daily Gratification—His Merits and Acts of Kindness—His proper Choice of Alms-Men—In this Respect meritorious—His Predecessor not so cautious.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XIII.

THE ALMS HOUSE AND TRUSTEES.

LEAVE now our streets, and in yon plain behold
Those pleasant seats for the reduced and old;
A merchant's gift, whose wife and children died,
When he to saving all his powers applied;
He wore his coat till bare was every thread,
And with the meanest fare his body fed.
He had a female cousin, who with care
Walk'd in his steps and learn'd of him to spare;
With emulation and success they strove,
Improving still, still seeking to improve,
As if that useful knowledge they would gain—
How little food would human life sustain:
No pauper came their table's crumbs to crave;
Scraping they lived, but not a scrap they gave:
When beggars saw the frugal merchant pass,
It moved their pity, and they said, "Alas!"

“ Hard is thy fate, my brother,” and they felt
A beggar’s pride as they that pity dealt :
The dogs, who learn of man to scorn the poor,
Bark’d him away from ev’ry decent door ;
While they who saw him bare, but thought him rich,
To show respect or scorn, they knew not which.

But while our merchant seem’d so base and mean,
He had his wanderings, sometimes, “ not unseen ;”
To give in secret was a favourite act,
Yet more than once they took him in the fact :
To scenes of various wo he nightly went,
And serious sums in healing misery spent ;
Oft has he cheer’d the wretched, at a rate
For which he daily might have dined on plate ;
He has been seen—his hair all silver-white,
Shaking and shining—as he stole by night,
To feed unenvied on his still delight.
A two-fold taste he had ; to give and spare,
Both were his duties, and had equal care ;
It was his joy, to sit alone and fast,
Then send a widow and her boys repast :
Tears in his eyes would, spite of him, appear,
But he from other eyes has kept the tear :
All in a wint’ry night from far he came,
To soothe the sorrows of a suff’ring dame ;
Whose husband robb’d him, and to whom he meant
A ling’ring, but reforming punishment :

Home then he walk'd, and found his anger rise,
When fire and rush-light met his troubled eyes;
But these extinguish'd, and his prayer address'd
To Heaven in hope, he calmly sank to rest.

His seventieth year was pass'd, and then was seen
A building rising on the northern green;
There was no blinding all his neighbours' eyes,
Or surely no one would have seen it rise:
Twelve rooms contiguous stood, and six were near,
There men were placed, and sober matrons here;
There were behind small useful gardens made,
Benches before, and trees to give them shade;
In the first room were seen, above, below,
Some marks of taste, a few attempts at show;
The founder's picture and his arms were there,
(Not till he left us,) and an elbow'd chair;
There, 'mid these signs of his superior place,
Sat the mild ruler of this humble race.

Within the row are men who strove in vain,
Through years of trouble, wealth and ease to gain;
Less must they have than an appointed sum,
And freemen been, or hither must not come;
They should be decent and command respect
(Though needing fortune,) whom these doors protect,
And should for thirty dismal years have tried
For peace unfelt and competence denied.

Strange! that o'er men thus train'd in sorrow's school,
Power must be held, and they must live by rule;
Infirm, corrected by misfortunes, old,
Their habits settled and their passions cold;
Of health, wealth, power, and worldly cares, bereft,
Still must they not at liberty be left;
There must be one to rule them, to restrain
And guide the movements of his erring train.

If then control imperious, check severe,
Be needed where such reverend men appear;
To what would youth, without such checks, aspire,
Free the wild wish, uncurb'd the strong desire?
And where (in college or in camp) they found
The heart ungovern'd and the hand unbound?

His house endow'd, the generous man resign'd
All power to rule, nay power of choice declined;
He and the female saint survived to view
Their work complete, and bade the world adieu!

Six are the guardians of this happy seat,
And one presides when they on business meet;
As each expires, the five a brother choose;
Nor would Sir Denys Brand the charge refuse;
True, 'twas beneath him, "but to do men good
"Was motive never by his heart withstood:"
He too is gone, and they again must strive
To find a man in whom his gifts survive.

Now, in the various records of the dead,
Thy worth, Sir Denys, shall be weigh'd and read;
There we the glory of thy house shall trace,
With each alliance of thy noble race.

Yes! here we have him!—"Came in William's reign,
"The Norman-Brand; the blood without a stain;
"From the fierce Dane and ruder Saxon clear,
"Pict, Irish, Scot, or Cambrian mountaineer;
"But the pure Norman was the sacred spring,
"And he, Sir Denys, was in heart a king:
"Erect in person and so firm in soul,
"Fortune he seem'd to govern and control;
"Generous as he who gives his all away,
"Prudent as one who toils for weekly pay;
"In him all merits were decreed to meet,
"Sincere though cautious, frank and yet discreet,
"Just all his dealings, faithful every word,
"His passions' master, and his temper's lord."

Yet more, kind dealers in decaying fame?
His magnanimity you next proclaim;
You give him learning, join'd with sound good sense'
And match his wealth with his benevolence;
What hides the multitude of sins, you add,
Yet seem to doubt if sins he ever had.

Poor honest Truth! thou writ'st of living men,
And art a railer and detractor then;

They die, again to be described, and now
A foe to merit and mankind art thou!

Why banish truth? it injures not the dead,
It aids not them with flattery to be fed;
And when mankind such perfect pictures view,
They copy less, the more they think them true.
Let us a mortal as he was behold,
And see the dross adhering to the gold;
When we the errors of the virtuous state,
Then erring men their worth may emulate.

View then this picture of a noble mind,
Let him be wise, magnanimous, and kind;
What was the wisdom? Was it not the frown
That keeps all question, all inquiry down?
His words were powerful and decisive all,
But his slow reasons came for no man's call.
" 'Tis thus," he cried, no doubt with kind intent,
To give results and spare all argument:—

" Let it be spared—all men at least agree
" Sir Denys Brand had magnanimity:
" His were no vulgar charities; none saw
" Him like the merchant to the hut withdraw;
" He left to meaner minds the simple deed,
" By which the houseless rest, the hungry feed;
" His was a public bounty vast and grand,
" 'Twas not in him to work with viewless hand;

“ He raised the room that towers above the street,
“ A public room where grateful parties meet;
“ He first the life-boat plann’d; to him the place
“ Is deep in debt—’twas he revived the race;
“ To every public act this hearty friend
“ Would give with freedom or with frankness lend;
“ His money built the jail, nor prisoner yet
“ Sits at his ease, but he must feel the debt;
“ To these let candour add his vast display,
“ Around his mansion all is grand and gay,
“ And this is bounty with the name of pay.”

I grant the whole, nor from one deed retract,
But wish recorded too the private act;
All these were great, but still our hearts approve
Those simpler tokens of the christian love;
’Twould give me joy some gracious deed to meet,
That has not call’d for glory through the street:
Who felt for many, could not always shun,
In some soft moment, to be kind to one;
And yet they tell us, when Sir Denys died,
That not a widow in the Borough sigh’d;
Great were his gifts, his mighty heart I own,
But why describe what all the world has known?

The rest is petty pride, the useless art
Of a vain mind to hide a swelling heart:
Small was his private room; men found him there
By a plain table, on a paltry chair;

A wretched floor-cloth, and some prints around,
The easy purchase of a single pound :
These humble trifles and that study small
Make a strong contrast with the servants' hall ;
There barely comfort, here a proud excess,
The pompous seat of pamper'd idleness,
Where the sleek rogues with one consent declare,
They would not live upon his honour's fare ;
He daily took but one half-hour to dine,
On one poor dish and some three sips of wine ;
Then he'd abuse them for their sumptuous feasts,
And say, " My friends ! you make yourselves like
beasts ;

" One dish suffices any man to dine,
" But you are greedy as a herd of swine ;
" Learn to be temperate."—Had they dared t' obey,
He would have praised and turn'd them all away.

Friends met Sir Denys riding in his ground,
And there the meekness of his spirit found :
For that grey coat, not new for many a year,
Hides all that would like decent dress appear ;
An old brown pony 'twas his will to ride,
Who shuffled onward, and from side to side ;
A five-pound purchase, but so fat and sleek,
His very plenty made the creature weak.

" Sir Denys Brand ! and on so poor a steed !"
" Poor ! it may be—such things I never heed :"

And who that youth behind, of pleasant mien,
Equipp'd as one who wishes to be seen,
Upon a horse, twice victor for a plate,
A noble hunter, bought at dearest rate?—
Him the lad fearing, yet resolved to guide,
He curbs his spirit, while he strokes his pride.

“A handsome youth, Sir Denys; and a horse
“Of finer figure never trod the course,—
“Yours, without question?”—“Yes! I think a groom
“Bought me the beast; I cannot say the sum:
“I ride him not, it is a foolish pride
“Men have in cattle—but my people ride;
“The boy is—hark ye, sirrah! what’s your name?
“Ay, Jacob, yes! I recollect—the same;
“As I bethink me now, a tenant’s son—
“I think a tenant—is your father one?”

There was an idle boy who ran about,
And found his master’s humble spirit out;
He would at awful distance snatch a look,
Then run away and hide him in some nook;
“For oh!” quoth he, “I dare not fix my sight
“On him, his grandeur puts me in a fright;
“Oh! Mister Jacob, when you wait on him,
“Do you not quake and tremble every limb?”

The steward soon had orders—“Summers, see
“That Sam be clothed, and let him wait on me.”

Sir Denys died, bequeathing all affairs
In trust to Laughton's long experienced cares ;
Before a guardian, and Sir Denys dead,
All rule and power devolved upon his head :
Numbers are call'd to govern, but in fact
Only the powerful and assuming act.

Laughton, too wise to be a dupe to fame,
Cared not a whit of what descent he came,
Till he was rich; he then conceived the thought
To fish for pedigree, but never caught :
All his desire, when he was young and poor,
Was to advance; he never cared for more:
“ Let me buy, sell, be factor, take a wife,
“ Take any road to get along in life.”

Was he a miser then? a robber? foe
To those who trusted? a deceiver?—No !
He was ambitious; all his powers of mind
Were to one end controll'd, improved, combined;
Wit, learning, judgment, were, by his account,
Steps for the ladder he design'd to mount :
Such step was money: wealth was but his slave,
For power he gain'd it, and for power he gave;
Full well the Borough knows that he'd the art
Of bringing money to the surest mart ;
Friends too were aids, they led to certain ends,
Increase of power and claim on other friends.

A favourite step was marriage: then he gain'd
Seat in our hall, and o'er his party reign'd;
Houses and lands he bought, and long'd to buy,
But never drew the springs of purchase dry,
And thus at last they answer'd every call,
The failing found him ready for their fall:
He walks along the street, the mart, the quay,
And looks and mutters, "This belongs to me."
His passions all partook the general bent;
Interest inform'd him when he should resent,
How long resist, and on what terms relent:
In points where he determined to succeed,
In vain might reason or compassion plead;
But gain'd his point, he was the best of men,
'Twas loss of time to be vexatious then:
Hence he was mild to all men whom he led,
Of all who dared resist the scourge and dread.

Falsehood in him was not the useless lie
Of boasting pride or laughing vanity;
It was the gainful, the persuading art,
That made its way and won the doubting heart,
Which argued, soften'd, humbled, and prevail'd;
Nor was it tried till ev'ry truth had fail'd;
No sage on earth could more than he despise
Degrading, poor, unprofitable lies.

Though fond of gain, and grieved by wanton waste,
To social parties he had no distaste;

With one presiding purpose in his view,
He sometimes could descend to trifle too!
Yet, in these moments, he had still the art
To ope the looks and close the guarded heart;
And, like the public host, has sometimes made
A grand repast, for which the guests have paid.

At length, with power endued and wealthy grown,
Frailties and passions, long suppress'd, were shown;
Then to provoke him was a dangerous thing,
His pride would punish, and his temper sting;
His powerful hatred sought th' avenging hour,
And his proud vengeance struck with all his power,
Save when th' offender took a prudent way
The rising storm of fury to allay:
This might he do, and so in safety sleep,
By largely casting to the angry deep;
Or, better yet (its swelling force t' assuage,)
By pouring oil of flattery on its rage.

And now, of all the heart approved, possess'd,
Fear'd, favour'd, follow'd, dreaded and caress'd,
He gently yields to one mellifluous joy,
The only sweet that is not found to cloy,
Bland adulation! other pleasures pall
On the sick taste, and transient are they all;
But this one sweet has such enchanting power,
The more we take, the faster we devour;

Nauseous to those who must the dose apply,
And most disgusting to the standers-by;
Yet in all companies will Laughton feed,
Nor care how grossly men perform the deed.

As gapes the nursling, or, what comes more near,
Some Friendly-island chief, for hourly cheer;
When wives and slaves, attending round his seat,
Prepare by turns the masticated meat:
So for this master, husband, parent, friend,
His ready slaves their various efforts blend,
And, to their lord still eagerly inclined,
Pour the crude trash of a dependent mind.

But let the muse assign the man his due:
Worth he possess'd, nor were his virtues few;—
He sometimes help'd the injured in their cause;
His power and purse have back'd the failing laws;
He for religion has a due respect,
And all his serious notions are correct;
Although he pray'd and languish'd for a son,
He grew resign'd when Heaven denied him one;
He never to this quiet mansion sends
Subject unfit, in compliment to friends:
Not so Sir Denys, who would yet protest
He always chose the worthiest and the best;
Not men in trade by various loss brought down,
But those whose glory once amazed the town,

Who their last guinea in their pleasures spent,
Yet never fell so low as to repent;
To these his pity he could largely deal,
Wealth they had known, and therefore want could feel.

Three seats were vacant while Sir Denys reign'd,
And three such favourites their admission gain'd;
These let us view, still more to understand
The moral feelings of Sir Denys Brand.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XIV.

INHABITANTS OF THE ALMS-HOUSE.

BLANEY.

Sed quia cæcus inest vitiis amor, omne futurum
Despicitur; suadent brevem præsentia fructum,
Et ruit in vetitum damni secura libido.

Claudian. in Eutrop.

Nunquam parvo contenta peracta
Et quæditorum terrâ pelagoque ciborum
Ambitiosa fames et lautæ gloria mensæ,

Et Luxus, populator Opum, tibi semper adhærens,
Infelix humili gressu comitatur Egestas.

Claudian. in Rufinum.

Behold what blessing wealth to life can lend !

Pope.

Blaney, a wealthy Heir, dissipated, and reduced to Poverty—
His Fortune restored by Marriage: again consumed—His
Manner of living in the West Indies—Recalled to a larger
Inheritance—His more refined and expensive Luxuries—His
Method of quieting Conscience—Death of his Wife—Again
become poor—His Method of supporting Existence—His
Ideas of Religion—His Habits and Connexions when old—
Admitted into the Alms-House.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XIV.

LIFE OF BLANEY.

OBSERVE that tall pale veteran! what a look
Of shame and guilt! who cannot read that book?
Misery and mirth are blended in his face,
Much innate vileness and some outward grace;
There wishes strong and stronger griefs are seen,
Looks ever changed, and never one serene:
Show not that manner, and these features all,
The serpent's cunning and the sinner's fall?

Hark to that laughter!—'tis the way he takes
To force applause for each vile jest he makes;
Such is yon man, by partial favour sent
To these calm seats to ponder and repent.

Blaney, a wealthy heir at twenty-one,
At twenty-five was ruin'd and undone:
These years with grievous crimes we need not load,
He found his ruin in the common road;—

Gamed without skill, without inquiry bought,
Lent without love, and borrow'd without thought.
But, gay and handsome, he had soon the dower
Of a kind wealthy widow in his power:
Then he aspired to loftier flights of vice,
To singing harlots of enormous price:
He took a jockey in his gig to buy
A horse, so valued, that a duke was shy:
To gain the plaudits of the knowing few,
Gamblers and grooms, what would not Blaney do?
His dearest friend, at that improving age,
Was Hounslow Dick, who drove the western stage.

Cruel he was not—If he left his wife,
He left her to her own pursuits in life;
Deaf to reports, to all expenses blind,
Profuse, not just, and careless, but not kind.

Yet thus assisted, ten long winters pass'd
In wasting guineas ere he saw his last;
Then he began to reason, and to feel
He could not dig, nor had he learn'd to steal;
And should he beg as long as he might live,
He justly fear'd that nobody would give:
But he could charge a pistol, and at will,
All that was mortal, by a bullet kill:
And he was taught, by those whom he would call
Man's surest guides—that he was mortal all.

While thus he thought, still waiting for the day,
When he should dare to blow his brains away,
A place for him a kind relation found,
Where England's monarch ruled, but far from English
ground:

He gave employ that might for bread suffice,
Correct his habits and restrain his vice.

Here Blaney tried (what such man's miseries teach)
To find what pleasures were within his reach;
These he enjoy'd, though not in just the style
He once possess'd them in his native isle;
Congenial souls he found in every place,
Vice in all soils, and charms in every race:
His lady took the same amusing way,
And laugh'd at Time till he had turn'd them grey:
At length for England once again they steer'd,
By ancient views and new designs endear'd;
His kindred died, and Blaney now became
An heir to one who never heard his name.

What could he now?—The man had tried before
The joys of youth, and they were joys no more;
To vicious pleasure he was still inclined,
But vice must now be season'd and refined;
Then as a swine he would on pleasure seize,
Now common pleasures had no power to please:
Beauty alone has for the vulgar charms,
He wanted beauty trembling with alarms:

His was no more a youthful dream of joy,
The wretch desired to ruin and destroy;
He bought indulgence with a boundless price,
Most pleased when decency bow'd down to vice,
When a fair dame her husband's honour sold,
And a frail countess play'd for Blaney's gold.

“ But did not conscience in her anger rise ? ”

Yes ! and he learn'd her terrors to despise ;
When stung by thought, to soothing books he fled,
And grew composed and harden'd as he read ;
Tales of Voltaire, and essays gay and slight,
Pleased him and shone with their phosphoric light ;
Which, though it rose from objects vile and base,
Where'er it came threw splendour on the place,
And was that light which the deluded youth,
And this grey sinner, deem'd the light of truth.

He different works for different cause admired,
Some fix'd his judgment, some his passions fired ;
To cheer the mind and raise a dormant flame,
He had the books, decreed to lasting shame,
Which those who read are careful not to name :
These won to vicious act the yielding heart,
And then the cooler reasoners soothed the smart.

He heard of Blount, and Mandeville, and Chubb,
How they the doctors of their day would drub ;
How Hume had dwelt on miracles so well,
That none would now believe a miracle ;

And though he cared not works so grave to read,
He caught their faith and sign'd the sinner's creed.

Thus was he pleased to join the laughing side,
Nor ceased the laughter when his lady died;
Yet was he kind and careful of her fame,
And on her tomb inscribed a virtuous name;
“A tender wife, respected, and so forth,”—
The marble still bears witness to the worth.

He has some children, but he knows not where;
Something they cost, but neither love nor care;
A father's feelings he has never known,
His joys, his sorrows, have been all his own.

He now would build—and lofty seat he built,
And sought, in various ways, relief from guilt.
Restless, for ever anxious to obtain
Ease for the heart by ramblings of the brain,
He would have pictures, and of course a taste,
And found a thousand means his wealth to waste.
Newmarket steeds he bought at mighty cost;
They sometimes won, but Blaney always lost.

Quick came his ruin, came when he had still
For life a relish, and in pleasure skill:
By his own idle reckoning he supposed
His wealth would last him till his life was closed;
But no! he found this final hoard was spent,
While he had years to suffer and repent.

Yet at the last, his noble mind to show,
And in his misery how he bore the blow,
He view'd his only guinea, then suppress'd,
For a short time, the tumults in his breast,
And, moved by pride, by habit and despair,
Gave it an opera-bird to hum an air.

Come ye! who live for pleasure, come, behold
A man of pleasure when he's poor and old;
When he looks back through life, and cannot find
A single action to relieve his mind;
When he looks forward, striving still to keep
A steady prospect of eternal sleep;
When not one friend is left, of all the train
Whom 'twas his pride and boast to entertain,—
Friends now employ'd from house to house to run,
And say, "Alas! poor Blaney is undone!"—
Those whom he shook with ardour by the hand,
By whom he stood as long as he could stand,
Who seem'd to him from all deception clear,
And who, more strange! might think themselves sincere.

Lo! now the hero shuffling through the town,
To hunt a dinner and to beg a crown;
To tell an idle tale, that boys may smile;
To bear a strumpet's billet-doux a mile;
To cull a wanton for a youth of wealth,
(With reverend view to both his taste and health);

To be a useful, needy thing between
Fear and desire—the pander and the screen;
To flatter pictures, houses, horses, dress,
The wildest fashion or the worst excess;
To be the grey seducer, and entice
Unbearded folly into acts of vice;
And then, to level every fence which law
And virtue fix to keep the mind in awe,
He first inveigles youth to walk astray,
Next prompts and soothes them in their fatal way,
Then vindicates the deed, and makes the mind his prey.

Unhappy man! what pains he takes to state—
(Proof of his fear!) that all below is fate;
That all proceed in one appointed track,
Where none can stop, or take their journey back:
Then what is vice or virtue?—Yet he'll rail
At priests till memory and quotation fail;
He reads, to learn the various ills they've done,
And calls them vipers, every mother's son.

He is the harlot's aid, who wheedling tries
To move her friend for vanity's supplies;
To weak indulgence he allures the mind,
Loth to be duped, but willing to be kind;
And if successful—what the labour pays?
He gets the friend's contempt and Chloe's praise,
Who, in her triumph, condescends to say,
“What a good creature Blaney was to-day!”

Hear the poor dæmon when the young attend,
And willing ear to vile experience lend;
When he relates (with laughing, leering eye)
The tale licentious, mix'd with blasphemy:
No genuine gladness his narrations cause,
The frailest heart denies sincere applause;
And many a youth has turn'd him half aside,
And laugh'd aloud, the sign of shame to hide.

Blaney, no aid in his vile cause to lose,
Buys pictures, prints, and a licentious muse;
He borrows every help from every art,
To stir the passions and mislead the heart:
But from the subject let us soon escape,
Nor give this feature all its ugly shape;
Some to their crimes escape from satire owe;
Who shall describe what Blaney dares to show?

While thus the man, to vice and passion slave,
Was, with his follies, moving to the grave,
The ancient ruler of this mansion died,
And Blaney boldly for the seat applied:
Sir Denys Brand, then guardian, join'd his suit;
“Tis true,” said he, “the fellow’s quite a brute—
“A very beast; but yet, with all his sin,
“He has a manner—let the devil in.”

They half complied, they gave the wish'd retreat,
But raised a worthier to the vacant seat.

Thus forced on ways unlike each former way,
Thus led to prayer without a heart to pray,
He quits the gay and rich, the young and free,
Among the badge-men with a badge to be:
He sees an humble tradesman raised to rule
The grey-beard pupils of this moral school;
Where he himself, an old licentious boy,
Will nothing learn, and nothing can enjoy;
In temp'rate measures he must eat and drink,
And, pain of pains! must live alone and think.

In vain, by fortune's smiles, thrice affluent made,
Still has he debts of ancient date unpaid;
Thrice into penury by error thrown,
Not one right maxim has he made his own;
The old men shun him,—some his vices hate,
And all abhor his principles and prate;
Nor love nor care for him will mortal show,
Save a frail sister in the female row.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XV.

INHABITANTS OF THE ALMS-HOUSE.

CLELIA.

She early found herself mistress of herself. All she did was right : all she said was admired. Early, very early, did she dismiss blushes from her cheek : she could not blush, because she could not doubt ; and silence, whatever was the subject, was as much a stranger to her as diffidence.

Richardson.

Quo fugit Venus ? heu ! Quove color ? decens
Quo motus ? Quid habes illius, illius,
Quæ spirabat amores,
Quæ me surpuerat mihi ?

Horatius, lib. iv. od. 13.

Her lively and pleasant Manners—Her Reading and Decision—
Her Intercourse with different Classes of Society—Her Kind
of Character—The favoured Lover—Her Management of
him : his of her—After one Period, Clelia with an Attorney :
her Manner and Situation there—Another such Period, when
her Fortune still declines—Mistress of an Inn—A Widow—
Another such Interval : she becomes poor and infirm, but
still vain and frivolous—The fallen Vanity—Admitted into
the House : meets Blaney.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XV.

CLELIA.

WE had a sprightly nymph—in every town
Are some such sprights, who wander up and down;
She had her useful arts, and could contrive,
In time's despite, to stay at twenty-five;—
“Here will I rest; move on, thou lying year,
“This is mine age, and I will rest me here.”

Arch was her look, and she had pleasant ways
Your good opinion of her heart to raise;
Her speech was lively, and with ease express'd,
And well she judged the tempers she address'd:
If some soft stripling had her keenness felt,
She knew the way to make his anger melt;
Wit was allow'd her, though but few could bring
Direct example of a witty thing;
'Twas that gay, pleasant, smart, engaging speech,
Her beaux admired, and just within their reach;

Not indiscreet perhaps, but yet more free
Than prudish nymphs allow their wit to be.

Novels and plays, with poems, old and new,
Were all the books our nymph attended to;
Yet from the press no treatise issued forth,
But she would speak precisely of its worth.

She with the London stage familiar grew,
And every actor's name and merit knew;
She told how this or that their part mistook,
And of the rival Romeos gave the look;
Of either house 'twas hers the strength to see,
Then judge with candour—"Drury-Lane for me."

What made this knowledge, what this skill complete?
A fortnight's visit in Whitechapel-street.

Her place in life was rich and poor between,
With those a favourite, and with these a queen;
She could her parts assume, and condescend
To friends more humble while an humble friend;
And thus a welcome, lively guest could pass,
Threading her pleasant way from class to class.

"Her reputation?"—That was like her wit,
And seem'd her manner and her state to fit;
Something there was, what, none presumed to say,
Clouds lightly passing on a smiling day,—
Whispers and hints which went from ear to ear,
And mix'd reports no judge on earth could clear.

But of each sex a friendly number press'd
To joyous banquets this alluring guest:
There, if indulging mirth, and freed from awe,
If pleasing all, and pleased with all she saw,
Her speech were free, and such as freely dwelt
On the same feelings all around her felt;
Or if some fond presuming favourite tried
To come so near as once to be denied;
Yet not with brow so stern or speech so nice,
But that he ventured on denial twice:—
If these have been, and so has scandal taught,
Yet malice never found the proof she sought.

But then came one, the Lovelace of his day,
Rich, proud, and crafty, handsome, brave, and gay;
Yet loved he not those labour'd plans and arts,
But left the business to the ladies' hearts,
And when he found them in a proper train,
He thought all else superfluous and vain:
But in that training he was deeply taught,
And rarely fail'd of gaining all he sought;
He knew how far directly on to go,
How to recede and dally to and fro;
How to make all the passions his allies,
And, when he saw them in contention rise,
To watch the wrought-up heart, and conquer by
surprise.

Our heroine fear'd him not; it was her part,
To make sure conquest of such gentle heart—
Of one so mild and humble; for she saw
In Henry's eye a love chastised by awe.
Her thoughts of virtue were not all sublime,
Nor virtuous all her thoughts; 'twas now her time
To bait each hook, in every way to please,
And the rich prize with dext'rous hand to seize.
She had no virgin-terrors; she could stray
In all love's maze, nor fear to lose her way;
Nay, could go near the precipice, nor dread
A failing caution or a giddy head;
She'd fix her eyes upon the roaring flood,
And dance upon the brink where danger stood.

'Twas nature all, she judged, in one so young,
To drop the eye and falter in the tongue;
To be about to take, and then command
His daring wish, and only view the hand:
Yes! all was nature; it became a maid
Of gentle soul t'encourage love afraid;—
He, so unlike the confident and bold,
Would fly in mute despair to find her cold:
The young and tender germ requires the sun
To make it spread; it must be smiled upon.
Thus the kind virgin gentle means devised,
To gain a heart so fond, a hand so prized;

More gentle still she grew, to change her way,
Would cause confusion, danger, and delay:
Thus (an increase of gentleness her mode),
She took a plain, unvaried, certain road,
And every hour believed success was near,
Till there was nothing left to hope or fear.

It must be own'd that in this strife of hearts,
Man has advantage—has superior arts:
The lover's aim is to the nymph unknown,
Nor is she always certain of her own;
Or has her fears, nor these can so disguise,
But he who searches, reads them in her eyes,
In the avenging frown, in the regretting sighs:
These are his signals, and he learns to steer
The straighter course whenever they appear.

“Pass we ten years, and what was Clelia's fate?”
At an attorney's board alert she sate,
Not legal mistress: he with other men
Once sought her hand, but other views were then;
And when he knew he might the bliss command,
He other blissing sought, without the hand;
For still he felt alive the lambent flame,
And offer'd her a home,—and home she came.

There, though her higher friendships lived no more,
She loved to speak of what she shared before—
“Of the dear Lucy, heiress of the hall,—
“Of good Sir Peter,—of their annual ball,
“And the fair countess!—Oh! she loved them all!”
The humbler clients of her friend would stare,
The knowing smile,—but neither caused her care;
She brought her spirits to her humble state,
And soothed with idle dreams her frowning fate.

“Ten summers pass’d, and how was Clelia then?”—
Alas! she suffer’d in this trying ten;
The pair had parted: who to him attend,
Must judge the nymph unfaithful to her friend;
But who on her would equal faith bestow,
Would think him rash,—and surely she must know.

Then as a matron Clelia taught a school,
But nature gave not talents fit for rule:
Yet now, though marks of wasting years were seen,
Some touch of sorrow, some attack of spleen;
Still there was life, a spirit quick and gay,
And lively speech and elegant array.

The Griffin’s landlord these allured so far,
He made her mistress of his heart and bar;
He had no idle retrospective whim,
Till she was his, her deeds concern’d not him:

So far was well,—but Clelia thought not fit
(In all the Griffin needed) to submit:
Gaily to dress and in the bar preside,
Soothed the poor spirit of degraded pride;
But cooking, waiting, welcoming a crew
Of noisy guests, were arts she never knew:
Hence daily wars, with temporary truce,
His vulgar insult, and her keen abuse;
And as their spirits wasted in the strife,
Both took the Griffin's ready aid of life;
But she with greater prudence—Harry tried
More powerful aid, and in the trial died;
Yet drew down vengeance: in no distant time,
Th' insolvent Griffin struck his wings sublime;—
Forth from her palace walk'd th' ejected queen,
And show'd to frowning fate a look serene;
Gay spite of time, though poor, yet well attired,
Kind without love, and vain if not admired.

Another term is past; ten other years
In various trials, troubles, views, and fears:
Of these some pass'd in small attempts at trade;
Houses she kept for widowers lately made;
For now she said, "They'll miss th' endearing friend,
"And I'll be there the soften'd heart to bend:"
And true a part was done as Clelia plann'd—
The heart was soften'd, but she miss'd the hand.

She wrote a novel, and Sir Denys said,
The dedication was the best he read;
But Edgeworths, Smiths, and Radcliffes so engross'd
The public ear, that all her pains were lost.
To keep a toy-shop was attempt the last,
There too she fail'd, and schemes and hopes were past.

Now friendless, sick and old, and wanting bread,
The first-born tears of fallen pride were shed—
True, bitter tears; and yet that wounded pride,
Among the poor, for poor distinctions sigh'd.
Though now her tales were to her audience fit;
Though loud her tones, and vulgar grown her wit,
Though now her dress—(but let me not explain
The piteous patch-work of the needy-vain,
The flirtish form to coarse materials lent,
And one poor robe through fifty fashions sent);
Though all within was sad, without was mean,—
Still 'twas her wish, her comfort to be seen:
She would to plays on lowest terms resort,
Where once her box was to the beaux a court;
And, strange delight! to that same house, where she
Join'd in the dance, all gaiety and glee,
Now with the menials crowding to the wall,
She'd see, not share, the pleasures of the ball,
And with degraded vanity unfold,
How she too triumph'd in the years of old.

To her poor friends 'tis now her pride to tell
On what a height she stood before she fell;
At church she points to one tall seat, and "There
"We sat," she cries, "when my papa was mayor."
Not quite correct in what she now relates,
She alters persons, and she forges dates;
And finding memory's weaker help decay'd,
She boldly calls invention to her aid.

Touch'd by the pity he had felt before,
For her Sir Denys op'd the alms-house door:
"With all her faults," he said, "the woman knew
"How to distinguish—had a manner too;
"And, as they say, she is allied to some
"In decent station—let the creature come."

Here she and Blaney meet, and take their view
Of all the pleasures they would still pursue:
Hour after hour they sit, and nothing hide
Of vices past; their follies are their pride;
What to the sober and the cool are crimes,
They boast—exulting in those happy times;
The darkest deeds no indignation raise,
The purest virtue never wins their praise;
But still they on their ancient joys dilate,
Still with regret departed glories state,
And mourn their grievous fall, and curse their rigorous
fate.

To her poor husband, the new for pride to tell
On what a height she stood before the fall;
At length she came to one tall seat, and "There
"He sat," she cried, "where my poor husband
Not quite content in what she now related,
She chose persons, and she chose places,
And finding many a woman's heart
The lady's noble invitation to her side,
Floated by the way he had left behind,
For her his throne up to the clouds he raised,
With all her train, he said, "the noblest
"Here to distinguish had a manner too;
"And as they say, she is allied to some
"In short, relation to the Catholic cause,"
Here she and others meet, and take their view
Of all the phenomena they would still pursue;
Here after how they sit, and nothing else
Of those parts, their fellow and their wife;
It but to the subject, and the cool are shown,
They boast a question in their happy times;
The distant looks no indignation show,
The present view, as near their hearts, in a cold
But still they see their ancient joys distant,
Still with regret, and distant hopes at hand,
And mourn their graces fall, and curse their organs
And so to say, and so to say, and so to say

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XVI.

INHABITANTS OF THE ALMS-HOUSE.

BENBOW.

Thou art the Knight of the Burning Lamp—if thou wast any way given to virtue, I would swear by thy face; my oath should be by this fire. Oh! thou'rt a perpetual triumph, thou hast saved me a thousand marks in links and torches, walking in a night betwixt tavern and tavern.

Shakspeare.

Ebrietas tibi fida comes, tibi Luxus, et atris
Circa te semper volitans Infamia pennis.

Silius Italicus.

Benbow, an improper Companion for the Badgemen of the Alms-house—He resembles Bardolph—Left in Trade by his Father—Contracts useless Friendships—His Friends drink with him, and employ others—Called worthy and honest! Why—Effect of Wine on the Mind of Man—Benbow's common Subject—the Praise of departed Friends and Patrons—'Squire Asgill, at the Grange: his Manners, Servants, Friends—True to his Church: ought therefore to be spared—His Son's different Conduct—Vexation of the Father's Spirit if admitted to see the Alteration—Captain Dowling, a boon Companion, ready to drink at all Times, and with any Company: famous in his Club-room—His easy Departure—Dolly Murrey, a Maiden advanced in Years: abides by Ratafia and Cards—Her free Manners—Her Skill in the Game—Her Preparation and Death—Benbow, how interrupted: his Submission.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XVI.

BENBOW.

SEE! yonder badgeman, with that glowing face,
A meteor shining in this sober place;
Vast sums were paid, and many years were past,
Ere gems so rich around their radiance cast!
Such was the fiery front that Bardolph wore,
Guiding his master to the tavern-door;
There first that meteor rose, and there alone,
In its due place, the rich effulgence shone:
But this strange fire the seat of peace invades,
And shines portentous in these solemn shades.

Benbow, a boon companion, long approved
By jovial sets, and (as he thought) beloved,
Was judged as one to joy and friendship prone,
And deem'd injurious to himself alone;
Gen'rous and free, he paid but small regard
To trade, and fail'd; and some declared "'twas hard:"

These were his friends—his foes conceived the case
Of common kind ; he sought and found disgrace :
The reasoning few, who neither scorn'd nor loved,
His feelings pitied and his faults reproved.

Benbow, the father, left possessions fair,
A worthy name and business to his heir ;
Benbow, the son, those fair possessions sold,
And lost his credit, while he spent the gold :
He was a jovial trader : men enjoy'd
The night with him ; his day was unemploy'd ;
So when his credit and his cash were spent,
Here, by mistaken pity, he was sent ;
Of late he came, with passions unsubdued,
And shared and cursed the hated solitude,
Where gloomy thoughts arise, where grievous cares
intrude.

Known but in drink,—he found an easy friend,
Well pleased his worth and honour to commend ;
And thus inform'd, the guardian of the trust
Heard the applause and said the claim was just ;
A worthy soul ! unfitted for the strife,
Care and contention of a busy life ;—
Worthy, and why ?—that o'er the midnight bowl
He made his friend the partner of his soul,
And any man his friend :—then thus in glee,
“ I speak my mind, I love the truth,” quoth he ;

Till 'twas his fate that useful truth to find,
'Tis sometimes prudent not to speak the mind.

With wine inflated, man is all upblown,
And feels a power which he believes his own;
With fancy soaring to the skies, he thinks
His all the virtues all the while he drinks;
But when the gas from the balloon is gone,
When sober thoughts and serious cares come on,
Where then the worth that in himself he found?—
Vanish'd—and he sank grov'ling on the ground.

Still some conceit will Benbow's mind inflate,
Poor as he is,—'tis pleasant to relate
The joys he once possess'd—it soothes his present
state.

Seated with some grey beadsman, he regrets
His former feasting, though it swell'd his debts;
Toppers once famed, his friends in earlier days,
Well he describes, and thinks description praise:
Each hero's worth with much delight he paints;
Martyrs they were, and he would make them saints.

“Alas! alas!” Old England now may say,
“My glory withers; it has had its day:
“We're fallen on evil times; men read and think;
“Our bold forefathers loved to fight and drink.

“Then lived the good 'Squire Asgill—what a change
“Has death and fashion shown us at the Grange!

“ He bravely thought it best became his rank,
“ That all his tenants and his tradesmen drank;
“ He was delighted from his favourite room
“ To see them 'cross the park go daily home,
“ Praising aloud the liquor and the host,
“ And striving who should venerate him most.

“ No pride had he, and there was difference small
“ Between the master's and the servants' hall;
“ And here or there the guests were welcome all.
“ Of Heaven's free gifts he took no special care,
“ He never quarrel'd for a simple hare;
“ But sought, by giving sport, a sportsman's name,
“ Himself a poacher though at other game:
“ He never planted nor inclosed—his trees
“ Grew like himself, untroubled and at ease:
“ Bounds of all kinds he hated, and had felt
“ Choked and imprison'd in a modern belt,
“ Which some rare genius now has twined about
“ The good old house, to keep old neighbours out:
“ Along his valleys, in the evening-hours,
“ The borough-damsels stray'd to gather flowers,
“ Or by the brakes and brushwood of the park,
“ To take their pleasant rambles in the dark.

“ Some prudes, of rigid kind, forbore to call
“ On the kind females—favourites at the hall;
“ But better natures saw, with much delight,
“ The different orders of mankind unite;

“ ’Twas schooling pride to see the footman wait,
“ Smile on his sister and receive her plate.
“ His worship ever was a churchman true,
“ He held in scorn the methodistic crew;
“ May God defend the Church, and save the King,
“ He’d pray devoutly and divinely sing.
“ Admit that he the holy day would spend
“ As priests approved not, still he was a friend:
“ Much then I blame the preacher, as too nice,
“ To call such trifles by the name of vice;
“ Hinting, though gently and with cautious speech,
“ Of good example—’tis their trade to preach:
“ But still ’twas pity, when the worthy ’squire
“ Stuck to the church; what more could they require?
“ ’Twas almost joining that fanatic crew,
“ To throw such morals at his honour’s pew;
“ A weaker man, had he been so reviled,
“ Had left the place—he only swore and smiled.
“ But think, ye rectors and ye curates, think,
“ Who are your friends, and at their frailties wink;
“ Conceive not—mounted on your Sunday-throne,
“ Your fire-brands fall upon your foes alone;
“ They strike your patrons—and, should all withdraw,
“ In whom your wisdoms may discern a flaw,
“ You would the flower of all your audience lose,
“ And spend your crackers on their empty pews.

“ The father dead, the son has found a wife,
“ And lives a formal, proud, unsocial life;—
“ The lands are now enclosed; the tenants all,
“ Save at a rent-day, never see the hall:
“ No lass is suffer'd o'er the walks to come,
“ And if there's love, they have it all at home.
“ Oh! could the ghost of our good 'squire arise,
“ And see such change; would it believe its eyes?
“ Would it not glide about from place to place,
“ And mourn the manners of a feebler race?
“ At that long table, where the servants found
“ Mirth and abundance while the year went round;
“ Where a huge pollard on the winter-fire,
“ At a huge distance made them all retire;
“ Where not a measure in the room was kept,
“ And but one rule—they tippled till they slept,—
“ There would it see a pale old hag preside,
“ A thing made up of stinginess and pride;
“ Who carves the meat, as if the flesh could feel,
“ Careless whose flesh must miss the plenteous meal:
“ Here would the ghost a small coal-fire behold,
“ Not fit to keep one body from the cold;
“ Then would it flit to higher rooms, and stay
“ To view a dull, dress'd company at play;
“ All the old comfort, all the genial fare
“ For ever gone! how sternly would it stare:

“ And though it might not to their view appear,
“ ’Twould cause among them lassitude and fear;
“ Then wait to see—where he delight has seen—
“ The dire effect of fretfulness and spleen.

“ Such were the worthies of these better days;
“ We had their blessings—they shall have our praise.

“ Of Captain Dowling would you hear me speak?
“ I’d sit and sing his praises for a week:

“ He was a man, and man-like all his joy,—

“ I’m led to question was he ever boy?

“ Beef was his breakfast;—if from sea and salt,

“ It relish’d better with his wine of malt;

“ Then, till he dined, if walking in or out,

“ Whether the gravel teased him or the gout,

“ Though short in wind and flannel’d every limb,

“ He drank with all who had concerns with him:

“ Whatever trader, agent, merchant, came,

“ They found him ready, every hour the same;

“ Whatever liquors might between them pass,

“ He took them all, and never balk’d his glass:

“ Nay, with the seamen working in the ship,

“ At their request, he’d share the grog and flip:

“ But in the club-room was his chief delight,

“ And punch the favourite liquor of the night;

“ Man after man they from the trial shrank,

“ And Dowling ever was the last who drank:

“ Arrived at home, he, ere he sought his bed,
“ With pipe and brandy would compose his head;
“ Then half an hour was o’er the news beguiled,
“ When he retired as harmless as a child.
“ Set but aside the gravel and the gout,
“ And breathing short—his sand ran fairly out.
“ At fifty-five we lost him—after that
“ Life grows insipid and its pleasures flat;
“ He had indulged in all that man can have,
“ He did not drop a dotard to his grave;
“ Still to the last, his feet upon the chair,
“ With rattling lungs now gone beyond repair;
“ When on each feature death had fix’d his stamp,
“ And not a doctor could the body vamp;
“ Still at the last, to his beloved bowl
“ He clung, and cheer’d the sadness of his soul;
“ For though a man may not have much to fear,
“ Yet death looks ugly, when the view is near:
“ —‘ I go,’ he said, ‘ but still my friends shall say,
“ ‘ ’Twas as a man—I did not sneak away;
“ ‘ An honest life with worthy souls I’ve spent,—
“ ‘ Come, fill my glass;’—he took it and he went.
“ Poor Dolly Murrey!—I might live to see
“ My hundredth year, but no such lass as she.
“ Easy by nature, in her humour gay,
“ She chose her comforts, ratafia and play:

“ She loved the social game, the decent glass ;
“ And was a jovial, friendly, laughing lass ;
“ We sat not then at Whist demure and still,
“ But pass’d the pleasant hours at gay Quadrille :
“ Lame in her side, we placed her in her seat,
“ Her hands were free, she cared not for her feet ;
“ As the game ended, came the glass around,
“ (So was the loser cheer’d, the winner crown’d.)
“ Mistress of secrets, both the young and old
“ In her confided—not a tale she told ;
“ Love never made impression on her mind,
“ She held him weak, and all his captives blind ;
“ She suffer’d no man her free soul to vex,
“ Free from the weakness of her gentle sex ;
“ One with whom ours unmoved conversing sate,
“ In cool discussion or in free debate.

“ Once in her chair we’d placed the good old lass,
“ Where first she took her preparation-glass ;
“ By lucky thought she’d been that day at prayers,
“ And long before had fix’d her small affairs ;
“ So all was easy—on her cards she cast
“ A smiling look ; I saw the thought that pass’d :
“ ‘ A king,’ she call’d—though conscious of her skill,
“ ‘ Do more,’ I answer’d—‘ More,’ she said, ‘ I will ;’
“ And more she did—cards answer’d to her call,
“ She saw the mighty to her mightier fall :

“ ‘A vole! a vole!’ she cried, ‘ ’tis fairly won,

“ ‘My game is ended and my work is done;’—

“ This said, she gently, with a single sigh,

“ Died as one taught and practised how to die.

“ Such were the dead-departed; I survive,

“ To breathe in pain among the dead-alive.”

The bell then call'd these ancient men to pray,

“ Again!” said Benbow,—“ tolls it every day?

“ Where is the life I led?”—He sigh'd and walk'd his
way.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XVII.

THE HOSPITAL AND GOVERNORS.

Blessed be the man who provideth for the sick and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in time of trouble.

Quas dederis, solas semper habebis opes.

Martial.

Nil negat, et sese vel non poscentibus offert.

Claudian.

Decipias alios verbis voltuque benigno;
Nam mihi jam notus dissimulator eris.

Martial.

Christian Charity anxious to provide for future as well as present Miseries—Hence the Hospital for the Diseased—Description of a recovered Patient—The Building: how erected—The Patrons and Governors—Eusebius—The more active Manager of Business a moral and correct Contributor—One of different Description—Good, the Result, however intermixed with Imperfection.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XVII.

THE HOSPITAL AND GOVERNORS.

An ardent spirit dwells with christian love,
The eagle's vigour in the pitying dove;
'Tis not enough that we with sorrow sigh,
That we the wants of pleading man supply;
That we in sympathy with sufferers feel,
Nor hear a grief without a wish to heal;
Not these suffice—to sickness, pain, and wo,
The christian spirit loves with aid to go;
Will not be sought, waits not for want to plead
But seeks the duty—nay, prevents the need;
Her utmost aid to every ill applies,
And plans relief for coming miseries.

Hence yonder building rose : on either side
Far stretch'd the wards, all airy, warm, and wide;
And every ward has beds by comfort spread,
And smooth'd for him who suffers on the bed:

There all have kindness, most relief,—for some
Is cure complete,—it is the sufferer's home:
Fevers and chronic ills, corroding pains,
Each accidental mischief man sustains;
Fractures and wounds, and wither'd limbs and lame,
With all that, slow or sudden, vex our frame,
Have here attendance—here the sufferers lie,
(Where love and science every aid apply),
And heal'd withrapture live, or soothed by comfort die.

See! one relieved from anguish, and to-day
Allow'd to walk and look an hour away;
Two months confined by fever, frenzy, pain,
He comes abroad and is himself again:
'Twas in the spring, when carried to the place,
The snow fell down and melted in his face.

'Tis summer now; all objects gay and new,
Smiling alike the viewer and the view:
He stops as one unwilling to advance,
Without another and another glance;
With what a pure and simple joy he sees
Those sheep and cattle browsing at their ease;
Easy himself, there's nothing breathes or moves,
But he would cherish—all that lives he loves:
Observing every ward as round he goes,
He thinks what pain, what danger they enclose;
Warm in his wish for all who suffer there,
At every view he meditates a prayer:

No evil counsels in his breast abide,
There joy and love, and gratitude reside.

The wish that Roman necks in one were found,
That he who form'd the wish might deal the wound,
This man had never heard; but of the kind,
Is that desire which rises in his mind;
He'd have all English hands (for further he
Cannot conceive extends our charity),
All but his own, in one right-hand to grow,
And then what hearty shake would he bestow.

“How rose the building?”—Piety first laid
A strong foundation, but she wanted aid;
To Wealth unworldly was her prayer address'd,
Who largely gave, and she the donor bless'd:
Unworldly Wealth then to his couch withdrew,
And took the sweetest sleep he ever knew.

Then busy Vanity sustain'd her part,
“And much,” she said, “it moved her tender heart;
“To her all kinds of man's distress were known,
“And all her heart adopted as its own.”

Then Science came—his talents he display'd,
And Charity with joy the dome survey'd;
Skill, Wealth, and Vanity, obtain the fame,
And Piety, the joy that makes no claim.

Patrons there are, and governors, from whom
The greater aid and guiding orders come;

Who voluntary cares and labours take,
The sufferers' servants for the service' sake;
Of these a part I give you—but a part,—
Some hearts are hidden, some have not a heart.

First let me praise—for so I best shall paint
That pious moralist, that reasoning saint!
Can I of worth like thine, Eusebius, speak?
The man is willing, but the muse is weak;—
'Tis thine to wait on wo! to soothe! to heal!
With learning social, and polite with zeal:
In thy pure breast although the passions dwell,
'They're train'd by virtue and no more rebel;
But have so long been active on her side,
That passion now might be itself the guide.

Law, conscience, honour, all obey'd; all give
Th' approving voice, and make it bliss to live;
While faith, when life can nothing more supply,
Shall strengthen hope and make it bliss to die.

He preaches, speaks and writes with manly sense,
No weak neglect, no labour'd eloquence;
Goodness and wisdom are in all his ways,
The rude revere him and the wicked praise.

Upon humility his virtues grow,
And tower so high because so fix'd below;
As wider spreads the oak his boughs around,
When deeper with his roots he digs the solid ground.

By him, from ward to ward, is every aid
The sufferer needs, with every care convey'd:
Like the good tree he brings his treasure forth,
And, like the tree, unconscious of his worth:
Meek as the poorest Publican is he,
And strict as lives the straitest Pharisee;
Of both, in him unite the better part,
The blameless conduct and the humble heart.

Yet he escapes not; he, with some, is wise
In carnal things, and loves to moralize:
Others can doubt, if all that christian care
Has not its price—there's something he may share:
But this and ill severer he sustains,
As gold the fire, and as unhurt remains;
When most reviled, although he feels the smart,
It wakes to nobler deeds the wounded heart,
As the rich olive, beaten for its fruit,
Puts forth at every bruise a bearing shoot.

A second friend we have, whose care and zeal
But few can equal—few indeed can feel;
He lived a life obscure, and profits made
In the coarse habits of a vulgar trade.
His brother, master of a hoy, he loved
So well, that he the calling disapproved:
“Alas! poor Tom!” the landman oft would sigh,
When the gale freshen'd and the waves ran high;

And when they parted, with a tear he'd say,
"No more adventure!—here in safety stay."
Nor did he feign; with more than half he had,
He would have kept the seaman, and been glad.

Alas! how few resist, when strongly tried—
A rich relation's nearer kinsman died;
He sicken'd, and to him the landman went,
And all his hours with cousin Ephraim spent.
This Thomas heard, and cared not: "I," quoth he,
"Have one in port upon the watch for me."
So Ephraim died, and when the will was shown,
Isaac, the landman, had the whole his own:
Who to his brother sent a moderate purse,
Which he return'd, in anger, with his curse;
Then went to sea, and made his grog so strong,
He died before he could forgive the wrong.

The rich man built a house, both large and high,
He enter'd in and set him down to sigh;
He planted ample woods and gardens fair,
And walk'd with anguish and compunction there:
The rich man's pines to every friend a treat,
He saw with pain and he refused to eat;
His daintiest food, his richest wines, were all
Turn'd by remorse to vinegar and gall:
The softest down, by living body press'd,
The rich man bought, and tried to take his rest;

But care had thorns upon his pillow spread,
And scatter'd sand and nettles in his bed:
Nervous he grew,—would often sigh and groan,
He talk'd but little, and he walk'd alone;
Till by his priest convinced, that from one deed
Of genuine love would joy and health proceed;
He from that time with care and zeal began
To seek and soothe the grievous ills of man;
And as his hands their aid to grief apply,
He learns to smile and he forgets to sigh.

Now he can drink his wine and taste his food,
And feel the blessings, Heav'n has dealt, are good;
And, since the suffering seek the rich man's door,
He sleeps as soundly as when young and poor.

Here much he gives—is urgent more to gain;
He begs—rich beggars seldom sue in vain:
Preachers most famed he moves, the crowd to move,
And never wearies in the work of love:
He rules all business, settles all affairs,
He makes collections, he directs repairs;
And if he wrong'd one brother,—Heav'n forgive
The man by whom so many brethren live!

Then, 'mid our signatures, a name appears,
Of one for wisdom famed above his years;
And these were forty: he was from his youth
A patient searcher after useful truth:

To language little of his time he gave,
To science less, nor was the muse's slave;
Sober and grave, his college sent him down,
A fair example for his native town.

Slowly he speaks, and with such solemn air,
You'd think a Socrates or Solon there;
For though a Christian, he's disposed to draw
His rules from reason's and from nature's law.

"Know," he exclaims, "my fellow mortals, know,
"Virtue alone is happiness below;
"And what is virtue? prudence first to choose
"Life's real good,—the evil to refuse;
"Add justice then, the eager hand to hold,
"To curb the lust of power and thirst of gold;
"Join temp'rance next, that cheerful health insures,
"And fortitude unmoved, that conquers or endures."

He speaks, and lo!—the very man you see,
Prudent and temperate, just and patient he,
By prudence taught his worldly wealth to keep,
No folly wastes, no avarice swells the heap:
He no man's debtor, no man's patron lives;
Save sound advice, he neither asks nor gives;
By no vain thoughts or erring fancy sway'd,
His words are weighty, or at least are weigh'd;
Temp'rate in every place—abroad, at home,
Thence will applause, and hence will profit come;

And health from either he in time prepares
For sickness, age, and their attendant cares,
But not for fancy's ills;—he never grieves
For love that wounds or friendship that deceives;
His patient soul endures what Heav'n ordains,
But neither feels nor fears ideal pains.

“Is aught then wanted in a man so wise?”—
Alas!—I think he wants infirmities;
He wants the ties that knit us to our kind—
The cheerful, tender, soft, complacent mind,
That would the feelings, which he dreads, excite,
And make the virtues he approves delight;
What dying martyrs, saints, and patriots feel,
The strength of action and the warmth of zeal.

Again attend!—and see a man whose cares
Are nicely placed on either world's affairs,—
Merchant and saint; 'tis doubtful if he knows
To which account he most regard bestows;
Of both he keeps his ledger:—there he reads
Of gainful ventures and of godly deeds;
There all he gets or loses find a place,
A lucky bargain and a lack of grace.

The joys above this prudent man invite
To pay his tax—devotion!—day and night;
The pains of hell his timid bosom awe,
And force obedience to the church's law:

Hence that continual thought,—that solemn air,—
Those sad good works, and that laborious prayer.

All these (when conscience, waken'd and afraid,
To think how avarice calls and is obey'd)
He in his journal finds, and for his grief
Obtains the transient opium of relief.

“ Sink not, my soul!—my spirit, rise and look
“ O'er the fair entries of this precious book:
“ Here are the sins, our debts;—this fairer side
“ Has what to carnal wish our strength denied;
“ Has those religious duties every day
“ Paid,—which so few upon the sabbath pay;
“ Here too are conquests over frail desires,
“ Attendance due on all the church requires;
“ Then alms I give—for I believe the word
“ Of holy writ, and lend unto the Lord,
“ And if not all th' importunate demand,
“ The fear of want restrains my ready hand;
“ —Behold! what sums I to the poor resign,
“ Sums placed in Heaven's own book, as well as mine:
“ Rest then, my spirit!—fastings, prayers, and alms,
“ Will soon suppress these idly-raised alarms,
“ And weigh'd against our frailties, set in view
“ A noble balance in our favour due:
“ Add that I yearly here affix my name,
“ Pledge for large payment—not from love of fame,

“ But to make peace within ;—that peace to make,
“ What sums I lavish ! and what gains forsake !
“ Cheer up, my heart !—let’s cast off every doubt,
“ Pray without dread, and place our money out.”

Such the religion of a mind that steers
Its way to bliss, between its hopes and fears ;
Whose passions in due bounds each other keep,
And thus subdued, they murmur till they sleep ;
Whose virtues all their certain limits know,
Like well-dried herbs that neither fade nor grow ;
Who for success and safety ever tries,
And with both worlds alternately complies.

Such are the guardians of this bless’d estate,
Whate’er without, they’re praised within the gate ;
That they are men, and have their faults, is true,
But here their worth alone appears in view :
The Muse indeed, who reads the very breast,
Has something of the secrets there express’d,
But yet in charity ;—and when she sees
Such means for joy or comfort, health or ease,
And knows how much united minds effect,
She almost dreads their failings to detect ;
But truth commands :—in man’s erroneous kind,
Virtues and frailties mingle in the mind,
Happy !—when fears to public spirit move,
And even vices to the work of love.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XVIII.

THE POOR AND THEIR DWELLINGS.

Bene paupertas
Humili tecto contenta latet.

Seneca.

Omnes quibu' res sunt minu' secundæ, magi' sunt, nescio quo modo,
Suspiciosi ; ad contumeliam omnia accipiunt magis ;
Propter suam impotentiam se semper credunt negligi.

Terent. in Adelph. Act 4. Scen. 3.

Show not to the poor thy pride,
Let their home a cottage be ;
Nor the feeble body hide
In a palace fit for thee ;
Let him not about him see
Lofty ceilings, ample halls,
Or a gate his boundary be,
Where nor friend or kinsman calls.

Let him not one walk behold,
That only one which he must tread,
Nor a chamber large and cold,
Where the aged and sick are led ;
Better far his humble shed,
Humble sheds of neighbours by,
And the old and tatter'd bed,
Where he sleeps and hopes to die.

To quit of torpid sluggishness the cave,
And from the pow'rful arms of sloth be free,
'Tis rising from the dead—Alas ! it cannot be.

Thomson's Castle of Indolence.

THE BOROUGH

CHAPTER XXVII

The Method of treating the Borough Paupers—Many maintained at their own Dwellings—Some Characters of the Poor—The School-mistress, when aged—The Idiot—The poor Sailor—The declined Tradesman and his Companion—This contrasted with the Maintenance of the Poor in a common Mansion erected by the Hundred—The Objections to this Method: Not Want, nor Cruelty, but the necessary Evils of this Mode—What they are—Instances of the Evil—A Return to the Borough Poor—The Dwellings of these—The Lanes and By-ways—No Attention here paid to Convenience—The Pools in the Path-ways—Amusements of Sea-port Children—The Town-Flora—Herbs on Walls and vacant Spaces—A female Inhabitant of an Alley—A large Building let to several poor Inhabitants—Their Manners and Habits.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XVIII.

THE POOR AND THEIR DWELLINGS.

YES! we've our Borough-vices, and I know
How far they spread, how rapidly they grow;
Yet think not virtue quits the busy place,
Nor charity, the virtues' crown and grace.

“Our poor, how feed we?”—To the most we give
A weekly dole, and at their homes they live;—
Others together dwell,—but when they come
To the low roof, they see a kind of home,
A social people whom they've ever known,
With their own thoughts and manners like their own.

At her old house, her dress, her air the same,
I see mine ancient letter-loving dame:
“Learning, my child,” said she, “shall fame com-
mand;

“Learning is better worth than house or land—

“For houses perish, lands are gone and spent;

“In learning then excel, for that's most excellent.”

“ And what her learning ? ” — ’Tis with awe to look
In every verse throughout one sacred book ;
From this her joy, her hope, her peace is sought ;
This she has learn’d, and she is nobly taught.

If aught of mine have gain’d the public ear ;
RUTLAND deigns these humble Tales to hear ;
If critics pardon, what my friends approved ;
Can I mine ancient widow pass unmoved ?
Shall I not think what pains the matron took,
When first I trembled o’er the gilded book ?
How she, all patient, both at eve and morn,
Her needle pointed at the guarding horn ;
And how she soothed me, when, with study sad,
I labour’d on to reach the final zad ?
Shall I not grateful still the dame survey,
And ask the Muse the poet’s debt to pay ?

Nor I alone, who hold a trifler’s pen,
But half our bench of wealthy, weighty men,
Who rule our Borough, who enforce our laws ;
They own the matron as the leading cause,
And feel the pleasing debt, and pay the just applause :
To her own house is borne the week’s supply ;
There she in credit lives, there hopes in peace to die.

With her a harmless idiot we behold,
Who hoards up silver shells for shining gold ;

These he preserves, with unremitted care,
To buy a seat, and reign the Borough's mayor:
Alas!—who could th' ambitious changeling tell,
That what he sought our rulers dared to sell?

Near these a sailor, in that hut of thatch
(A fish-boat's cabin is its nearest match),
Dwells, and the dungeon is to him a seat,
Large as he wishes—in his view complete:
A lockless coffer and a lidless hutch
That hold his stores, have room for twice as much:
His one spare shirt, long glass, and iron box,
Lie all in view; no need has he for locks:
Here he abides, and, as our strangers pass,
He shows the shipping, he presents the glass;
He makes (unask'd) their ports and business known,
And (kindly heard) turns quickly to his own,
Of noble captains, heroes every one,—
You might as soon have made the steeple run:
And then his messmates, if you're pleased to stay,
He'll one by one the gallant souls display,
And as the story verges to an end,
He'll wind from deed to deed, from friend to friend;
He'll speak of those long lost, the brave of old,
As princes gen'rous and as heroes bold;
Then will his feelings rise, till you may trace
Gloom, like a cloud, frown o'er his manly face,—

And then a tear or two, which sting his pride;
These he will dash indignantly aside,
And splice his tale;—now take him from his cot,
And for some cleaner birth exchange his lot,
How will he all that cruel aid deplore?
His heart will break, and he will fight no more.

Here is the poor old merchant: he declined,
And, as they say, is not in perfect mind;
In his poor house, with one poor maiden friend,
Quiet he paces to his journey's end.

Rich in his youth, he traded and he fail'd;
Again he tried, again his fate prevail'd;
His spirits low and his exertions small,
He fell perforce, he seem'd decreed to fall:
Like the gay knight, unapt to rise was he,
But downward sank with sad alacrity.

A borough-place we gain'd him—in disgrace
For gross neglect, he quickly lost the place;
But still he kept a kind of sullen pride,
Striving his wants to hinder or to hide:
At length, compell'd by very need, in grief
He wrote a proud petition for relief.

“He did suppose a fall, like his, would prove
“Of force to wake their sympathy and love;
“Would make them feel the changes all may know,
“And stir them up a due regard to show.”

His suit was granted;—to an ancient maid,
Relieved herself, relief for him was paid :
Here they together (meet companions) dwell,
And dismal tales of man's misfortunes tell :
“ 'Twas not a world for them, God help them ! they
“ Could not deceive, nor flatter, nor betray ;
“ But there's a happy change, a scene to come,
“ And they, God help them ! shall be soon at home.”

If these no pleasures nor enjoyments gain,
Still none their spirits nor their speech restrain ;
They sigh at ease, 'mid comforts they complain.
The poor will grieve, the poor will weep and sigh,
Both when they know, and when they know not why ;
But we our bounty with such care bestow,
That cause for grieving they shall seldom know.

Your plan I love not;—with a number you
Have placed your poor, your pitiable few ;
There, in one house, throughout their lives to be,
The pauper-palace which they hate to see :
That giant-building, that high-bounding wall,
Those bare-worn walks, that lofty thund'ring hall !
That large loud clock, which tolls each dreaded hour,
Those gates and locks, and all those signs of power :
It is a prison, with a milder name,
Which few inhabit without dread or shame.

Be it agreed—the poor who hither come
Partake of plenty, seldom found at home ;

That airy rooms and decent beds are meant
To give the poor by day, by night, content;
That none are frighten'd, once admitted here,
By the stern looks of lordly overseer :
Grant that the guardians of the place attend,
And ready ear to each petition lend;
That they desire the grieving poor to show
What ills they feel, what partial acts they know,
Not without promise, nay desire to heal
Each wrong they suffer and each wo they feel.

Alas! their sorrows in their bosoms dwell;
They've much to suffer, but have nought to tell;
They have no evil in the place to state,
And dare not say, it is the house they hate :
They own there's granted all such place can give,
But live repining, for 'tis there they live.

Grandsires are there, who now no more must see,
No more must nurse upon the trembling knee
The lost loved daughter's infant progeny :
Like death's dread mansion, this allows not place
For joyful meetings of a kindred race.

Is not the matron there, to whom the son
Was wont at each declining day to run;
He (when his toil was over) gave delight,
By lifting up the latch, and one "good night?"
Yes, she is here; but nightly to her door
The son, still lab'ring, can return no more.

Widows are here, who in their huts were left,
Of husbands, children, plenty, ease bereft;
Yet all that grief within the humble shed
Was soften'd, soften'd in the humble bed:
But here, in all its force, remains the grief,
And not one soft'ning object for relief.

Who can, when here, the social neighbour meet?
Who learn the story current in the street?
Who to the long-known intimate impart
Facts they have learn'd or feelings of the heart?—
They talk indeed, but who can choose a friend,
Or seek companions at their journey's end?

Here are not those whom they, when infants, knew;
Who, with like fortune, up to manhood grew;
Who, with like troubles, at old age arrived;
Who, like themselves, the joy of life survived;
Whom time and custom so familiar made,
That looks the meaning in the mind convey'd:
But here to strangers, words nor looks impart
The various movements of the suffering heart;
Nor will that heart with those alliance own,
To whom its views and hopes are all unknown.

What, if no grievous fears their lives annoy,
Is it not worse no prospects to enjoy?
'Tis cheerless living in such bounded view,
With nothing dreadful, but with nothing new;

Nothing to bring them joy, to make them weep,—
The day itself is, like the night, asleep :
Or on the sameness if a break be made,
'Tis by some pauper to his grave convey'd ;
By smuggled news from neighb'ring village told,
News never true, or truth a twelvemonth old ;
By some new inmate doom'd with them to dwell,
Or justice come to see that all goes well ;
Or change of room, or hour of leave to crawl
On the black footway winding with the wall,
Till the stern bell forbids, or master's sterner call.

Here too the mother sees her children train'd,
Her voice excluded and her feelings pain'd :
Who govern here, by general rules must move,
Where ruthless custom rends the bond of love.
Nations we know have nature's law transgress'd,
And snatch'd the infant from the parent's breast ;
But still for public good the boy was train'd,
The mother suffer'd, but the matron gain'd :
Here nature's outrage serves no cause to aid ;
The ill is felt, but not the Spartan made.

Then too I own, it grieves me to behold
Those ever virtuous, helpless now and old,
By all for care and industry approved,
For truth respected, and for temper loved ;
And who, by sickness and misfortune tried,
Gave want its worth and poverty its pride :

I own it grieves me to behold them sent
From their old home; 'tis pain, 'tis punishment,
To leave each scene familiar, every face,
For a new people and a stranger race;
For those who, sunk in sloth and dead to shame,
From scenes of guilt with daring spirits came;
Men, just and guileless, at such manners start,
And bless their God that time has fenced their heart,
Confirm'd their virtue, and expell'd the fear
Of vice in minds so simple and sincere.

Here the good pauper, losing all the praise
By worthy deeds acquired in better days,
Breathes a few months, then, to his chamber led,
Expires, while strangers prattle round his bed.

The grateful hunter, when his horse is old,
Wills not the useless favourite to be sold;
He knows his former worth, and gives him place
In some fair pasture, till he runs his race:
But has the labourer, has the seaman done
Less worthy service, though not dealt to one?
Shall we not then contribute to their ease,
In their old haunts, where ancient objects please?
That, till their sight shall fail them, they may trace
The well-known prospect and the long-loved face.

The noble oak, in distant ages seen,
With far-stretch'd boughs and foliage fresh and green,

Though now its bare and forky branches show
How much it lacks the vital warmth below,
The stately ruin yet our wonder gains,
Nay, moves our pity, without thought of pains :
Much more shall real wants and cares of age
Our gentler passions in their cause engage ;—
Drooping and burthen'd with a weight of years,
What venerable ruin man appears !
How worthy pity, love, respect, and grief—
He claims protection—he compels relief ;—
And shall we send him from our view, to brave
The storms abroad, whom we at home might save,
And let a stranger dig our ancient brother's grave ?
No !—we will shield him from the storm he fears,
And when he falls, embalm him with our tears.

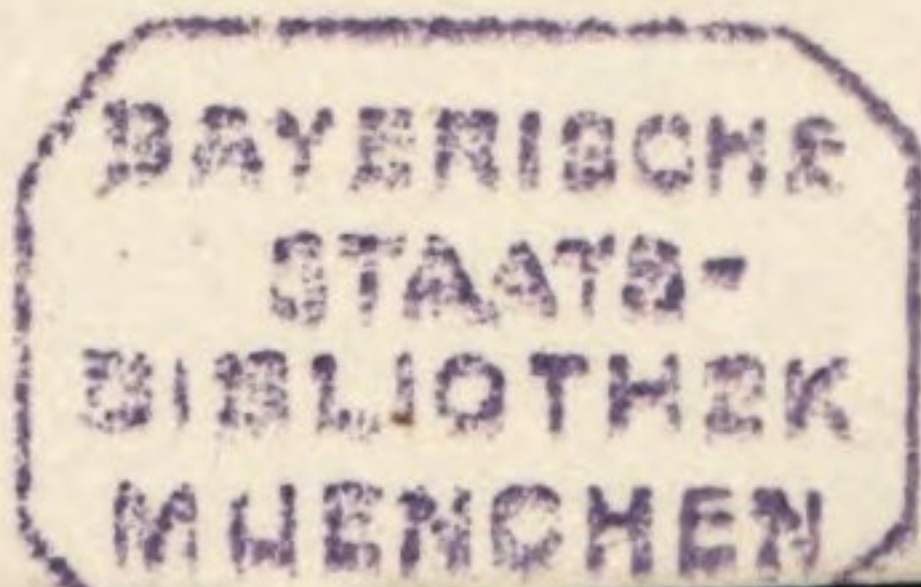
Farewell to these ; but all our poor to know,
Let's seek the winding lane, the narrow row,
Suburban prospects, where the traveller stops
To see the sloping tenement on props,
With building-yards immix'd, and humble sheds and
shops ;
Where the Cross-Keys and Plumber's-Arms invite
Laborious men to taste their coarse delight ;
Where the low porches, stretching from the door,
Gave some distinction in the days of yore,

Yet now neglected, more offend the eye,
By gloom and ruin, than the cottage by:
Places like these the noblest town endures,
The gayest palace has its sinks and sewers.

Here is no pavement, no inviting shop,
To give us shelter when compell'd to stop;
But plashy puddles stand along the way,
Fill'd by the rain of one tempestuous day;
And these so closely to the buildings run,
That you must ford them, for you cannot shun;
Though here and there convenient bricks are laid,
And door-side heaps afford their dubious aid.

Lo! yonder shed; observe its garden-ground,
With the low paling, form'd of wreck, around:
There dwells a fisher; if you view his boat,
With bed and barrel—'tis his house afloat;
Look at his house, where ropes, nets, blocks, abound,
Tar, pitch, and oakum—'tis his boat aground:
That space enclosed, but little he regards,
Spread o'er with relics of masts, sails, and yards:
Fish by the wall, on spit of elder, rest,
Of all his food, the cheapest and the best,
By his own labour caught, for his own hunger dress'd.

Here our reformers come not; none object
To paths polluted, or upbraid neglect;
None care that ashy heaps at doors are cast,
That coal-dust flies along the blinding blast:



None heed the stagnant pools on either side,
Where new-launch'd ships of infant-sailors ride :
Rodneys in rags here British valour boast,
And lisping Nelsons fright the Gallic coast.
They fix the rudder, set the swelling sail,
They point the bowsprit, and they blow the gale :
True to her port, the frigate scuds away,
And o'er that frowning ocean finds her bay :
Her owner rigg'd her, and he knows her worth,
And sees her, fearless, gunwale-deep go forth ;
Dreadless he views his sea, by breezes curl'd,
When inch-high billows vex the watery world.

There, fed by food they love, to rankest size,
Around the dwellings docks and wormwood rise ;
Here the strong mallow strikes her slimy root,
Here the dull nightshade hangs her deadly fruit ;
On hills of dust the henbane's faded green,
And pencil'd flower of sickly scent is seen ;
At the wall's base the fiery nettle springs,
With fruit globose and fierce with poison'd stings ;
Above (the growth of many a year) is spread
The yellow level of the stone-crop's bed ;
In every chink delights the fern to grow,
With glossy leaf and tawny bloom below : ⁽¹⁾
These, with our sea-weeds, rolling up and down,
Form the contracted Flora ⁽²⁾ of the town.

Say, wilt thou more of scenes so sordid know?
Then will I lead thee down the dusty row;
By the warm alley and the long close lane,—
There mark the fractured door and paper'd pane,
Where flags the noon-tide air, and, as we pass,
We fear to breathe the putrefying mass:
But fearless yonder matron; she disdains
To sigh for zephyrs from ambrosial plains;
But mends her meshes torn, and pours her lay
All in the stifling fervour of the day.

Her naked children round the alley run,
And roll'd in dust, are bronzed beneath the sun;
Or gambol round the dame, who, loosely dress'd,
Woos the coy breeze to fan the open breast:
She, once a handmaid, strove by decent art
To charm her sailor's eye and touch his heart;
Her bosom then was veil'd in kerchief clean,
And fancy left to form the charms unseen.

But when a wife, she lost her former care,
Nor thought on charms, nor time for dress could spare;
Careless she found her friends who dwelt beside,
No rival beauty kept alive her pride:
Still in her bosom virtue keeps her place,
But decency is gone, the virtues' guard and grace.

See that long boarded building!—By these stairs
Each humble tenant to that home repairs—

By one large window lighted—it was made
For some bold project, some design in trade :
This fail'd,—and one, a humorist in his way,
(Ill was the humour), bought it in decay;
Nor will he sell, repair, or take it down;
'Tis his,—what cares he for the talk of town?
“ No! he will let it to the poor;—a home
“ Where he delights to see the creatures come:”
“ They may be thieves;”—“ Well, so are richer
men;”
“ Or idlers, cheats, or prostitutes;”—“ What then?”
“ Outcasts pursued by justice, vile and base;”—
“ They need the more his pity and the place:”
Convert to system his vain mind has built,
He gives asylum to deceit and guilt.

In this vast room, each place by habit fix'd,
Are sexes, families, and ages mix'd,—
To union forced by crime, by fear, by need,
And all in morals and in modes agreed;
Some ruin'd men, who from mankind remove;
Some ruin'd females, who yet talk of love;
And some grown old in idleness—the prey
To vicious spleen, still railing through the day;
And need and misery, vice and danger bind
In sad alliance each degraded mind.

That window view!—oil'd paper and old glass
Stain the strong rays, which, though impeded, pass,

And give a dusty warmth to that huge room,
The conquer'd sunshine's melancholy gloom ;
When all those western rays, without so bright,
Within become a ghastly glimmering light,
As pale and faint upon the floor they fall,
Or feebly gleam on the opposing wall :
That floor, once oak, now pieced with fir unplanned,
Or, where not pieced, in places bored and stain'd ;
That wall once whiten'd, now an odious sight,
Stain'd with all hues, except its ancient white ;
The only door is fasten'd by a pin,
Or stubborn bar, that none may hurry in :
For this poor room, like rooms of greater pride,
At times contains what prudent men would hide.

Where'er the floor allows an even space,
Chalking and marks of various games have place ;
Boys, without foresight, pleased in halts swing ;
On a fix'd hook men cast a flying ring ;
While gin and snuff their female neighbours share,
And the black beverage in the fractured ware.

On swinging shelf are things incongruous stored,—
Scraps of their food,—the cards and cribbage-board,—
With pipes and pouches ; while on peg below,
Hang a lost member's fiddle and its bow :
That still reminds them how he'd dance and play,
Ere sent untimely to the convicts' bay.

Here by a curtain, by a blanket there,
Are various beds conceal'd, but none with care;
Where some by day and some by night, as best
Suit their employments, seek uncertain rest;
The drowsy children at their pleasure creep
To the known crib, and there securely sleep.

Each end contains a grate, and these beside
Are hung utensils for their boil'd and fried—
All used at any hour, by night, by day,
As suit the purse, the person, or the prey.

Above the fire, the mantel-shelf contains
Of china-ware some poor unmatch'd remains;
There many a tea-cup's gaudy fragment stands,
All placed by vanity's unwearied hands;
For here she lives, e'en here she looks about,
To find some small consoling objects out:
Nor heed these Spartan dames their house, nor sit
'Mid cares domestic,—they nor sew nor knit;
But of their fate discourse, their ways, their wars,
With arm'd authorities, their 'scapes and scars:
These lead to present evils, and a cup,
If fortune grant it, winds description up.

High hung at either end, and next the wall,
Two ancient mirrors show the forms of all,
In all their force;—these aid them in their dress,
But with the good, the evils too express,
Doubling each look of care, each token of distress.

NOTES TO LETTER XVIII.

Note 1, page 98, line 24.

With glossy leaf and tawny bloom below.

This scenery is, I must acknowledge, in a certain degree like that heretofore described in the Village ; but that also was a maritime country :—if the objects be similar, the pictures must (in their principal features) be alike, or be bad pictures. I have varied them as much as I could, consistently with my wish to be accurate.

Note 2, page 98, line 26.

Form the contracted Flora of the town.

The reader unacquainted with the language of botany is informed, that the Flora of a place means the vegetable species it contains, and is the title of a book which describes them.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XIX.

THE POOR OF THE BOROUGH.

THE PARISH-CLERK.

Nam dives qui fieri vult,
Et citò vult fieri; sed quæ reverentia legum,
Quis metus, aut pudor est unquam properantis avari?

Juvenal. Sat. 14.

Nocte brevem si fortè indulsit cura soporem,
Et toto versata thoro jam membra quiescunt,
Continuò templum et violati Numinis aras,
Et quod præcipuis mentem sudoribus urget,
Te videt in somnis; tua sacra et major imago
Humanâ turbat pavidum, cogitque fateri.

Juvenal. Sat. 13.

THE BOROUGH

LETTER XIX

The Parish-Clerk began his Duties with the late Vicar, a grave and austere Man ; one fully orthodox ; a Detector and Opposer of the Wiles of Satan—His Opinion of his own Fortitude—The more frail offended by these Professions—His good Advice gives further Provocation—They invent Stratagems to overcome his Virtue—His Triumph—He is yet not invulnerable: is assaulted by Fear of Want, and Avarice—He gradually yields to the Seduction—He reasons with himself and is persuaded—He offends, but with Terror ; repeats his Offence ; grows familiar with Crime : is detected—His Sufferings and Death.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XIX.

THE PARISH-CLERK.

WITH our late vicar, and his age the same,
His clerk, hight Jachin, to his office came;
The like slow speech was his, the like tall slender
frame:

But Jachin was the gravest man on ground,
And heard his master's jokes with look profound;
For worldly wealth this man of letters sigh'd,
And had a sprinkling of the spirit's pride:
But he was sober, chaste, devout and just,
One whom his neighbours could believe and trust:
Of none suspected, neither man nor maid
By him were wrong'd, or were of him afraid.

There was indeed a frown, a trick of state
In Jachin;—formal was his air and gait;
But if he seem'd more solemn and less kind,
Than some light men to light affairs confined,

Still 'twas allow'd that he should so behave
As in high seat, and be severely grave.

This book-taught man, to man's first foe profess'd
Defiance stern, and hate that knew not rest;
He held that Satan, since the world began,
In every act, had strife with every man;
That never evil deed on earth was done,
But of the acting parties he was one;
The flattering guide to make ill prospects clear;
To smooth rough ways the constant pioneer;
The ever-tempting, soothing, softening power,
Ready to cheat, seduce, deceive, devour.

“ Me has the sly seducer oft withstood,”
Said pious Jachin,—“ but he gets no good;
“ I pass the house where swings the tempting sign,
“ And pointing, tell him, ‘ Satan, that is thine:’
“ I pass the damsels pacing down the street,
“ And look more grave and solemn when we meet;
“ Nor doth it irk me to rebuke their smiles,
“ Their wanton ambling and their watchful wiles:
“ Nay, like the good John Bunyan, when I view
“ Those forms, I’m angry at the ills they do;
“ That I could pinch and spoil, in sin’s despite,
“ Beauties! which frail and evil thoughts excite*.

* John Bunyan, in one of the many productions of his zeal, has ventured to make public this extraordinary sentiment, which the frigid piety of our clerk so readily adopted.

“ At feasts and banquets seldom am I found,
“ And (save at church) abhor a tuneful sound;
“ To plays and shows I run not to and fro,
“ And where my master goes, forbear to go.”

No wonder Satan took the thing amiss,
To be opposed by such a man as this—
A man so grave, important, cautious, wise,
Who dared not trust his feeling or his eyes;
No wonder he should lurk and lie in wait,
Should fit his hooks and ponder on his bait,
Should on his movements keep a watchful eye;
For he pursued a fish who led the fry.

With his own peace our clerk was not content,
He tried, good man! to make his friends repent.

“ Nay, nay, my friends, from inns and taverns fly;
“ You may suppress your thirst, but not supply:
“ A foolish proverb says, ‘ the devil’s at home;’
“ But he is there, and tempts in every room:
“ Men feel, they know not why, such places please;
“ His are the spells—they’re idleness and ease;
“ Magic of fatal kind he throws around,
“ Where care is banish’d but the heart is bound.

“ Think not of beauty; when a maid you meet,
“ Turn from her view and step across the street;
“ Dread all the sex: their looks create a charm,
“ A smile should fright you and a word alarm:

“ E’en I myself, with all my watchful care,
“ Have for an instant felt th’ insidious snare,
“ And caught my sinful eyes at th’ endangering stare;
“ Till I was forced to smite my bounding breast
“ With forceful blow and bid the bold-one rest.

“ Go not with crowds when they to pleasure run,
“ But public joy in private safety shun:
“ When bells, diverted from their true intent,
“ Ring loud for some deluded mortal sent
“ To hear or make long speech in parliament;
“ What time the many, that unruly beast,
“ Roars its rough joy and shares the final feast:
“ Then heed my counsel, shut thine ears and eyes;
“ A few will hear me—for the few are wise.”

Not Satan’s friends, nor Satan’s self could bear
The cautious man who took of souls such care;
An interloper,—one who, out of place,
Had volunteer’d upon the side of grace:
There was his master ready once a week
To give advice; what further need he seek?
“ Amen, so be it:”—what had he to do
With more than this?—’twas insolent and new;
And some determined on a way to see
How frail he was, that so it might not be.

First they essay’d to tempt our saint to sin,
By points of doctrine argued at an inn;

Where he might warmly reason, deeply drink,
Then lose all power to argue and to think.

In vain they tried; he took the question up,
Clear'd every doubt, and barely touch'd the cup:
By many a text he proved his doctrine sound,
And look'd in triumph on the tempters round.

Next 'twas their care an artful lass to find,
Who might consult him, as perplex'd in mind;
She they conceived might put her case with fears,
With tender tremblings and seducing tears;
She might such charms of various kind display,
That he would feel their force and melt away:
For why of nymphs such caution and such dread,
Unless he felt and fear'd to be misled?

She came, she spake: he calmly heard her case,
And plainly told her 'twas a want of grace;
Bade her "such fancies and affections check,
"And wear a thicker muslin on her neck."
Abased, his human foes the combat fled,
And the stern clerk yet higher held his head.
They were indeed a weak, impatient set,
But their shrewd prompter had his engines yet;
Had various means to make a mortal trip,
Who shunn'd a flowing bowl and rosy lip;
And knew a thousand ways his heart to move,
Who flies from banquets and who laughs at love.

Thus far the playful Muse has lent her aid,
But now departs, of graver theme afraid;
Her may we seek in more appropriate time,—
There is no jesting with distress and crime.

Our worthy clerk had now arrived at fame,
Such as but few in his degree might claim;
But he was poor, and wanted not the sense
That lowly rates the praise without the pence:
He saw the common herd with reverence treat
The weakest burgess whom they chanced to meet;
While few respected his exalted views,
And all beheld his doublet and his shoes:
None, when they meet, would to his parts allow
(Save his poor boys) a hearing or a bow:
To this false judgment of the vulgar mind,
He was not fully, as a saint, resign'd;
He found it much his jealous soul affect,
To fear derision and to find neglect.

The year was bad, the christening-fees were small,
The weddings few, the parties paupers all:
Desire of gain with fear of want combined,
Raised sad commotion in his wounded mind;
Wealth was in all his thoughts, his views, his dreams,
And prompted base desires and baseless schemes.

Alas! how often erring mortals keep
The strongest watch against the foes who sleep;

While the more wakeful, bold and artful foe
Is suffer'd guardless and unmark'd to go.

Once in a month the sacramental bread
Our clerk with wine upon the table spread;
The custom this, that, as the vicar reads,
He for our off'rings round the church proceeds:
Tall spacious seats the wealthier people hid,
And none had view of what his neighbour did;
Laid on the box and mingled when they fell,
Who should the worth of each oblation tell?
Now as poor Jachin took the usual round,
And saw the alms and heard the metal sound,
He had a thought;—at first it was no more
Than—“these have cash and give it to the poor:”
A second thought from this to work began—
“And can they give it to a poorer man?”
Proceeding thus,—“My merit could they know,
“And knew my need, how freely they'd bestow;
“But though they know not, these remain the same;
“And are a strong, although a secret claim:
“To me, alas! the want and worth are known,
“Why then, in fact, 'tis but to take my own.”

Thought after thought pour'd in, a tempting train,—
“Suppose it done,—who is it could complain?
“How could the poor? for they such trifles share,
“As add no comfort, as suppress no care;

“ But many a pittance makes a worthy heap,—
“ What says the law? that silence puts to sleep:—
“ Nought then forbids, the danger could we shun,
“ And sure the business may be safely done.
“ But am I earnest?—earnest? No.—I say,
“ If such my mind, that I could plan a way;
“ Let me reflect;—I’ve not allow’d me time
“ To purse the pieces, and if dropp’d they’d chime:”
Fertile is evil in the soul of man,—
He paused,—said Jachin, “ They may drop on bran.
“ Why then ’tis safe and (all consider’d) just,
“ The poor receive it,—’tis no breach of trust:
“ The old and widows may their trifles miss,
“ There must be evil in a good like this:
“ But I’ll be kind—the sick I’ll visit twice,
“ When now but once, and freely give advice.
“ Yet let me think again:”—Again he tried,
For stronger reasons on his passion’s side,
And quickly these were found, yet slowly he complied.

The morning came: the common service done,—
Shut every door,—the solemn rite begun,—
And, as the priest the sacred sayings read,
The clerk went forward, trembling as he tread;
O’er the tall pew he held the box, and heard
The offer’d piece, rejoicing as he fear’d:
Just by the pillar, as he cautious tripp’d,
And turn’d the aile, he then a portion slipp’d

From the full store, and to the pocket sent,
But held a moment—and then down it went.

The priest read on, on walk'd the man afraid,
Till a gold offering in the plate was laid;
Trembling he took it, for a moment stopp'd,
Then down it fell, and sounded as it dropp'd;
Amazed he started, for th' affrighted man,
Lost and bewilder'd, thought not of the bran;
But all were silent, all on things intent
Of high concern, none ear to money lent;
So on he walk'd, more cautious than before,
And gain'd the purposed sum and one piece more.

Practice makes perfect;—when the month came
round,

He dropp'd the cash, nor listen'd for a sound;
But yet, when last of all th' assembled flock,
He ate and drank,—it gave th' electric shock:
Oft was he forced his reasons to repeat,
Ere he could kneel in quiet at his seat;
But custom soothed him—ere a single year
All this was done without restraint or fear:
Cool and collected, easy and composed,
He was correct till all the service closed;
'Then to his home, without a groan or sigh,
Gravely he went, and laid his treasure by.

Want will complain: some widows had express'd
A doubt if they were favour'd like the rest;

The rest described with like regret their dole,
And thus from parts they reason'd to the whole;
When all agreed some evil must be done,
Or rich men's hearts grew harder than a stone.

Our easy vicar cut the matter short;
He would not listen to such vile report.

All were not thus—there govern'd in that year
A stern stout churl, an angry overseer;
A tyrant fond of power, loud, lewd, and most severe:
Him the mild vicar, him the graver clerk,
Advised, reprov'd, but nothing would he mark,
Save the disgrace, “and that, my friends,” said he,
“Will I avenge, whenever time may be.”

And now, alas! 'twas time;—from man to man
Doubt and alarm and shrewd suspicions ran.

With angry spirit and with sly intent,
This parish-ruler to the altar went;
A private mark he fix'd on shillings three,
And but one mark could in the money see;
Besides, in peering round, he chanced to note
A sprinkling slight on Jachin's Sunday-coat:
All doubt was over:—when the flock were bless'd,
In wrath he rose, and thus his mind express'd.

“Foul deeds are here!” and saying this, he took
The clerk, whose conscience, in her cold-fit, shook:
His pocket then was emptied on the place;
All saw his guilt; all witness'd his disgrace:

He fell, he fainted, not a groan, a look,
Escaped the culprit; 'twas a final stroke—
A death-wound never to be heal'd—a fall
That all had witness'd, and amazed were all.

As he recover'd, to his mind it came,
“ I owe to Satan this disgrace and shame:”
All the seduction now appear'd in view;
“ Let me withdraw,” he said, and he withdrew;
No one withheld him, all in union cried,
E'en the avenger,—“ We are satisfied:”
For what has death in any form to give,
Equal to that man's terrors, if he live?

He lived in freedom, but he hourly saw
How much more fatal justice is than law;
He saw another in his office reign,
And his mild master treat him with disdain;
He saw that all men shunn'd him, some reviled,
The harsh pass'd frowning, and the simple smiled;
The town maintain'd him, but with some reproof,
“ And clerks and scholars proudly kept aloof.”

In each lone place, dejected and dismay'd,
Shrinking from view, his wasting form he laid;
Or to the restless sea and roaring wind
Gave the strong yearnings of a ruin'd mind:
On the broad beach, the silent summer-day,
Stretch'd on some wreck, he wore his life away;

Or where the river mingles with the sea,
Or on the mud-bank by the elder-tree,
Or by the bounding marsh-dyke, there was he:
And when unable to forsake the town,
In the blind courts he sate desponding down—
Always alone; then feebly would he crawl
The church-way walk, and lean upon the wall:
Too ill for this, he lay beside the door,
Compell'd to hear the reasoning of the poor:
He look'd so pale, so weak, the pitying crowd
Their firm belief of his repentance vow'd;
They saw him then so ghastly and so thin,
That they exclaim'd, “Is this the work of sin?”

“Yes,” in his better moments, he replied,
“Of sinful avarice and the spirit's pride;—
“While yet untempted, I was safe and well;
“Temptation came; I reason'd, and I fell:
“To be man's guide and glory I design'd,
“A rare example for our sinful kind;
“But now my weakness and my guilt I see,
“And am a warning—man, be warn'd by me!”

He said, and saw no more the human face;
To a lone loft he went, his dying place,
And, as the vicar of his state inquired,
Turn'd to the wall and silently expired!

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XX.

THE POOR OF THE BOROUGH.

ELLEN ORFORD.

Patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest.

Shakspeare. Lear.

“ No charms she now can boast,”—’tis true,
But other charmers wither too :
“ And she is old,”—the fact I know,
And old will other heroines grow ;
But not like them has she been laid,
In ruin’d castle, sore dismay’d ;
Where naughty man and ghostly spright
Fill’d her pure mind with awe and dread,
Stalk’d round the room, put out the light,
And shook the curtains round her bed.
No cruel uncle kept her land,
No tyrant father forced her hand ;
She had no vixen virgin-aunt,
Without whose aid she could not eat,
And yet who poison’d all her meat,
With gibe and sneer and taunt.
Yet of the heroine she’d a share,
She saved a lover from despair,
And granted all his wish, in spite
Of what she knew and felt was right :
But heroine then no more,
She own’d the fault, and wept and pray’d,
And humbly took the parish aid,
And dwelt among the poor.

**The Widow's Cottage—Blind Ellen one—Hers not the Sorrows
or Adventures of Heroines—What these are, first described
—Deserted Wives; rash Lovers; courageous Damsels: in
desolated Mansions; in grievous Perplexity—These Evils,
however severe, of short Duration—Ellen's Story—Her Em-
ployment in Childhood—First Love; first Adventure; its
miserable Termination—An idiot Daughter—A Husband—
Care in Business without Success—The Men's Despondency
and its Effect—Their Children: how disposed of—One par-
ticularly unfortunate—Fate of the Daughter—Ellen keeps a
School and is happy—becomes Blind: loses her School—Her
Consolations.**

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XX.

ELLEN ORFORD.

OBSERVE yon tenement, apart and small,
Where the wet pebbles shine upon the wall;
Where the low benches lean beside the door,
And the red paling bounds the space before;
Where thrift and lavender, and lad's-love⁽¹⁾ bloom,—
That humble dwelling is the widow's home;
'There live a pair, for various fortunes known,
But the blind Ellen will relate her own;—
Yet ere we hear the story she can tell,
On prouder sorrows let us briefly dwell.

I've often marvel'd, when by night, by day,
I've mark'd the manners moving in my way,
And heard the language and beheld the lives
Of lass and lover, goddesses and wives,
That books, which promise much of life to give,
Should show so little how we truly live.

To me it seems, their females and their men
Are but the creatures of the author's pen ;
Nay, creatures borrow'd and again convey'd
From book to book—the shadows of a shade :
Life, if they'd search, would show them many a change ;
The ruin sudden and the misery strange !
With more of grievous, base, and dreadful things,
Than novelists relate or poet sings :
But they, who ought to look the world around,
Spy out a single spot in fairy-ground ;
Where all, in turn, ideal forms behold,
And plots are laid and histories are told.

Time have I lent—I would their debt were less—
To flow'ry pages of sublime distress ;
And to the heroine's soul-distracting fears
I early gave my sixpences and tears :
Oft have I travell'd in these tender tales,
To Darnley-Cottages and Maple-Vales,
And watch'd the fair-one from the first-born sigh,
When Henry pass'd and gazed in passing by ;
Till I beheld them pacing in the park,
Close by a coppice where 'twas cold and dark ;
When such affection with such fate appear'd,
Want and a father to be shunn'd and fear'd,
Without employment, prospect, cot, or cash,
That I have judg'd th' heroic souls were rash.

Now shifts the scene,—the fair in tower confined,
In all things suffers but in change of mind;
Now woo'd by greatness to a bed of state,
Now deeply threaten'd with a dungeon's grate;
Till suffering much and being tried enough,
She shines, triumphant maid!—temptation-proof.

Then was I led to vengeful monks, who mix
With nymphs and swains, and play unpriestly tricks;
Then view'd banditti who in forest wide,
And cavern vast, indignant virgins hide;
Who, hemm'd with bands of sturdiest rogues about,
Find some strange succour, and come virgins out.

I've watch'd a wint'ry night on castle-walls,
I've stalk'd by moonlight through deserted halls,
And when the weary world was sunk to rest,
I've had such sights as—may not be express'd.

Lo! that chateau, the western tower decay'd,
The peasants shun it,—they are all afraid;
For there was done a deed!—could walls reveal,
Or timbers tell it, how the heart would feel!
Most horrid was it:—for, behold, the floor
Has stain of blood, and will be clean no more:
Hark to the winds! which through the wide saloon
And the long passage send a dismal tune,—
Music that ghosts delight in;—and now heed
Yon beauteous nymph, who must unmask the deed;

See! with majestic sweep she swims alone
Through rooms, all dreary, guided by a groan:
Though windows rattle, and though tap'stries shake,
And the feet falter every step they take,
'Mid moans and gibing sprights she silent goes,
To find a something, which will soon expose
The villanies and wiles of her determined foes:
And, having thus adventured, thus endured,
Fame, wealth, and lover, are for life secured.

Much have I fear'd, but am no more afraid,
When some chaste beauty, by some wretch betray'd,
Is drawn away with such distracted speed,
That she anticipates a dreadful deed:
Not so do I—Let solid walls impound
The captive fair, and dig a moat around;
Let there be brazen locks and bars of steel,
And keepers cruel, such as never feel;
With not a single note the purse supply,
And when she begs, let men and maids deny:
Be windows those from which she dares not fall,
And help so distant, 'tis in vain to call;
Still means of freedom will some power devise,
And from the baffled ruffian snatch his prize.

To Northern Wales, in some sequester'd spot,
I've follow'd fair Louisa to her cot;
Where, then a wretched and deserted bride,
The injured fair-one wished from man to hide;

Till by her fond repenting Belville found,
By some kind chance—the straying of a hound,
He at her feet craved mercy, nor in vain,
For the relenting dove flew back again.

There's something rapturous in distress, or, oh!
Could Clementina bear her lot of wo?
Or what she underwent could maiden undergo?
The day was fix'd; for so the lover sigh'd,
So knelt and craved, he couldn't be denied;
When, tale most dreadful! every hope adieu,—
For the fond lover is the brother too:
All other griefs abate; this monstrous grief
Has no remission, comfort, or relief;
Four ample volumes, through each page disclose,—
Good Heaven protect us! only woes on woes;
Till some strange means afford a sudden view
Of some vile plot, and every wo adieu! ⁽²⁾

Now should we grant these beauties all endure
Severest pangs, they've still the speediest cure;
Before one charm be wither'd from the face,
Except the bloom, which shall again have place,
In wedlock ends each wish, in triumph all disgrace;
And life to come, we fairly may suppose,
One light, bright contrast to these wild dark woes.

These let us leave, and at her sorrows look,
Too often seen, but seldom in a book;

Let her who felt, relate them :—on her chair
The heroine sits—in former years, the fair,
Now aged and poor ; but Ellen Orford knows,
That we should humbly take what Heav'n bestows.

“ My father died—again my mother wed,
“ And found the comforts of her life were fled ;
“ Her angry husband, vex'd through half his years
“ By loss and troubles, fill'd her soul with fears :
“ Their children many, and 'twas my poor place
“ To nurse and wait on all the infant-race ;
“ Labour and hunger were indeed my part,
“ And should have strengthen'd an erroneous heart.

“ Sore was the grief to see him angry come,
“ And teased with business, make distress at home :
“ The father's fury and the children's cries
“ I soon could bear, but not my mother's sighs ;
“ For she look'd back on comforts and would say,
“ ‘ I wrong'd thee, Ellen,’ and then turn away :
“ Thus for my age's good, my youth was tried,
“ And this my fortune till my mother died.

“ So, amid sorrow much and little cheer—
“ A common case, I pass'd my twentieth year ;
“ For these are frequent evils ; thousands share
“ An equal grief—the like domestic care.

“ Then in my days of bloom, of health and youth,
“ One, much above me, vow'd his love and truth :

“ We often met, he dreading to be seen,
“ And much I question’d what such dread might mean;
“ Yet I believed him true; my simple heart
“ And undirected reason took his part.

“ Can he who loves me, whom I love, deceive?
“ Can I such wrong of one so kind believe,
“ Who lives but in my smile, who trembles when I
“ grieve?

“ He dared not marry, but we met to prove
“ What sad encroachments and deceits has love:
“ Weak that I was, when he, rebuked, withdrew,
“ I let him see that I was wretched too;
“ When less my caution, I had still the pain
“ Of his or mine own weakness to complain.

“ Happy the lovers class’d alike in life,
“ Or happier yet the rich endowing wife;
“ But most aggrieved the fond believing maid,
“ Of her rich lover tenderly afraid:
“ You judge th’ event; for grievous was my fate,
“ Painful to feel, and shameful to relate:
“ Ah! sad it was my burthen to sustain,
“ When the least misery was the dread of pain;
“ When I have grieving told him my disgrace,
“ And plainly mark’d indifference in his face.

“ Hard! with these fears and terrors to behold
“ The cause of all, the faithless lover cold;

“ Impatient grown at every wish denied,
“ And barely civil, soothed and gratified;
“ Peevish when urged to think of vows so strong,
“ And angry when I spake of crime and wrong.
“ All this I felt, and still the sorrow grew,
“ Because I felt that I deserved it too,
“ And begg’d my infant stranger to forgive
“ The mother’s shame, which in herself must live.
“ When known that shame, I, soon expell’d from
home,
“ With a frail sister shared a hovel’s gloom;
“ There barely fed—(what could I more request?)
“ My infant slumberer sleeping at my breast,
“ I from my window saw his blooming bride,
“ And my seducer smiling at her side;
“ Hope lived till then; I sank upon the floor,
“ And grief and thought and feeling were no more:
“ Although revived, I judged that life would close,
“ And went to rest, to wonder that I rose:
“ My dreams were dismal, wheresoe’er I stray’d,
“ I seem’d ashamed, alarm’d, despised, betray’d;
“ Always in grief, in guilt, disgraced, forlorn,
“ Mourning that one so weak, so vile, was born;
“ The earth a desert, tumult in the sea,
“ The birds affrighten’d fled from tree to tree,
“ Obscured the setting sun, and every thing like me:

“ But Heav’n had mercy, and my need at length
“ Urged me to labour and renew’d my strength.
“ I strove for patience as a sinner must,
“ Yet felt th’ opinion of the world unjust :
“ There was my lover, in his joy, esteem’d,
“ And I, in my distress, as guilty deem’d ;
“ Yet sure, not all the guilt and shame belong
“ To her who feels and suffers for the wrong :
“ The cheat at play may use the wealth he’s won,
“ But is not honour’d for the mischief done ;
“ The cheat in love may use each villain-art,
“ And boast the deed that breaks the victim’s heart.
“ Four years were past ; I might again have found
“ Some erring wish, but for another wound :
“ Lovely my daughter grew, her face was fair,
“ But no expression ever brighten’d there ;
“ I doubted long, and vainly strove to make
“ Some certain meaning of the words she spake ;
“ But meaning there was none, and I survey’d
“ With dread the beauties of my idiot-maid.
“ Still I submitted ;—Oh ! ’tis meet and fit
“ In all we feel to make the heart submit ;
“ Gloomy and calm my days, but I had then,
“ It seem’d, attractions for the eyes of men :
“ The sober master of a decent trade
“ O’erlook’d my errors, and his offer made ;

“ Reason assented:—true, my heart denied,
“ ‘ But thou,’ I said, ‘ shalt be no more my guide.’
“ When wed, our toil and trouble, pains and care,
“ Of means to live procured us humble share;
“ Five were our sons,—and we, though careful, found
“ Our hopes declining as the year came round:
“ For I perceived, yet would not soon perceive,
“ My husband stealing from my view to grieve;
“ Silent he grew, and when he spoke he sigh’d,
“ And surly look’d and peevishly replied:
“ Pensive by nature, he had gone of late
“ To those who preach’d of destiny and fate,
“ Of things fore-doom’d, and of election-grace,
“ And how in vain we strive to run our race;
“ That all by works and moral worth we gain
“ Is to perceive our care and labour vain;
“ That still the more we pay, our debts the more
 remain:
“ That he who feels not the mysterious call,
“ Lies bound in sin, still grov’ling from the fall.
“ My husband felt not:—our persuasion, prayer,
“ And our best reason darken’d his despair;
“ His very nature changed; he now reviled
“ My former conduct,—he reproach’d my child:
“ He talk’d of bastard slips, and cursed his bed,
“ And from our kindness to concealment fled;

“ For ever to some evil change inclined,
“ To every gloomy thought he lent his mind,
“ Nor rest would give to us, nor rest himself could
find;

“ His son suspended saw him, long bereft

“ Of life, nor prospect of revival left.

“ With him died all our prospects, and once more

“ I shared th’ allotments of the parish poor;

“ They took my children too, and this I know

“ Was just and lawful, but I felt the blow:

“ My idiot-maid and one unhealthy boy

“ Were left, a mother’s misery and her joy.

“ Three sons I follow’d to the grave, and one—

“ Oh! can I speak of that unhappy son?

“ Would all the memory of that time were fled,

“ And all those horrors, with my child, were dead!

“ Before the world seduced him, what a grace

“ And smile of gladness shone upon his face!

“ Then he had knowledge; finely would he write;

“ Study to him was pleasure and delight;

“ Great was his courage, and but few could stand

“ Against the sleight and vigour of his hand;

“ The maidens loved him;—when he came to die,

“ No, not the coldest could suppress a sigh:

“ Here I must cease—how can I say, my child

“ Was by the bad of either sex beguiled?

“ Worst of the bad—they taught him that the laws
“ Made wrong and right; there was no other cause;
“ That all religion was the trade of priests,
“ And men, when dead, must perish like the beasts:—
“ And he, so lively and so gay before——
“ Ah! spare a mother—I can tell no more.

“ Int’rest was made that they should not destroy
“ The comely form of my deluded boy—
“ But pardon came not; damp the place and deep
“ Where he was kept, as they’d a tyger keep;
“ For he, unhappy! had before them all
“ Vow’d he’d escape, whatever might befall.

“ He’d means of dress, and dress’d beyond his means,
“ And so to see him in such dismal scenes,
“ I cannot speak it—cannot bear to tell
“ Of that sad hour—I heard the passing-bell!

“ Slowly they went; he smiled and look’d so smart,
“ Yet sure he shudder’d when he saw the cart,
“ And gave a look—until my dying-day,
“ That look will never from my mind away:
“ Oft as I sit, and ever in my dreams,
“ I see that look, and they have heard my screams.

“ Now let me speak no more—yet all declared
“ That one so young, in pity should be spared,
“ And one so manly;—on his graceful neck,
“ That chains of jewels may be proud to deck,

“ To a small mole a mother’s lips have press’d,—

“ And there the cord—my breath is sore oppress’d.

“ I now can speak again :—my elder boy

“ Was that year drown’d,—a seaman in a hoy :

“ He left a numerous race ; of these would some

“ In their young troubles to my cottage come,

“ And these I taught—an humble teacher I—

“ Upon their heavenly Parent to rely.

“ Alas ! I needed such reliance more :

“ My idiot-girl, so simply gay before,

“ Now wept in pain ; some wretch had found a time,

“ Depraved and wicked, for that coward-crime ;

“ I had indeed my doubt, but I suppress’d

“ The thought that day and night disturb’d my rest ;

“ She and that sick-pale brother—but why strive

“ To keep the terrors of that time alive ?

“ The hour arrived, the new, th’ undreaded pain,

“ That came with violence and yet came in vain.

“ I saw her die : her brother too is dead ;

“ Nor own’d such crime—what is it that I dread ?

“ The parish-aid withdrawn, I look’d around,

“ And in my school a bless’d subsistence found—

“ My winter-calm of life : to be of use

“ Would pleasant thoughts and heavenly hopes produce ;

“ I loved them all ; it soothed me to presage

“ The various trials of their riper age,

“ Then dwell on mine, and bless the Power who gave
“ Pains to correct us, and remorse to save.

“ Yes ! these were days of peace, but they are past,—
“ A trial came, I will believe, a last ;
“ I lost my sight, and my employment gone,
“ Useless I live, but to the day live on ;
“ Those eyes, which long the light of heaven enjoy’d,
“ Were not by pain, by agony destroy’d :
“ My senses fail not all ; I speak, I pray ;
“ By night my rest, my food I take by day ;
“ And as my mind looks cheerful to my end,
“ I love mankind and call my God my friend.”

NOTES TO LETTER XX.

Note 1, page 121, line 5.

Where thrift and lavender, and lad's-love bloom.

The lad's or boy's love of some counties is the plant southern-wood, the artemisia abrotanum of botanists.

Note 2, page 125, line 17.

Of some vile plot, and every wo adieu !

As this incident points out the work alluded to, I wish it to be remembered, that the gloomy tenour, the querulous melancholy of the story, is all I censure. The language of the writer is often animated, and is, I believe, correct ; the characters well drawn, and the manners described from real life ; but the perpetual occurrence of sad events, the protracted list of teasing and perplexing mischances, joined with much waspish invective, unallayed by pleasantry or sprightliness, and these continued through many hundred pages, render publications, intended for amusement and executed with ability, heavy and displeasing :—you find your favourite persons happy in the end ; but they have teased you so much with their perplexities by the way, that you were frequently disposed to quit them in their distresses.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XXI.

THE POOR OF THE BOROUGH.

ABEL KEENE.

Cœpis meliùs quàm desines: ultima primis

Cedunt. Dissimiles: hic vir et ille puer.

Ovid. Deïanira Herculi.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

Epistle to Timothy.

Abel, a poor Man, Teacher of a School of the lower Order; is placed in the Office of a Merchant; is alarmed by Discourses of the Clerks; unable to reply; becomes a Convert; dresses, drinks, and ridicules his former Conduct—The Remonstrance of his Sister, a devout Maiden—Its Effect—The Merchant dies—Abel returns to Poverty unpitied; but relieved—His abject Condition—His Melancholy—He wanders about: is found—His own Account of himself, and the Revolutions in his Mind.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XXI.

ABEL KEENE.

A QUIET simple man was Abel Keene,
He meant no harm, nor did he often mean:
He kept a school of loud rebellious boys,
And growing old, grew nervous with the noise;
When a kind merchant hired his useful pen,
And made him happiest of accompting men;
With glee he rose to every easy day,
When half the labour brought him twice the pay.

There were young clerks, and there the merchant's
son,

Choice spirits all, who wish'd him to be one;
It must, no question, give them lively joy,
Hopes long indulged, to combat and destroy;
At these they level'd all their skill and strength,—
He fell not quickly, but he fell at length:

They quoted books, to him both bold and new,
And scorn'd as fables all he held as true;
“Such monkish stories and such nursery lies,”
That he was struck with terror and surprise.

“What! all his life had he the laws obey'd,
“Which they broke through and were not once afraid?
“Had he so long his evil passions check'd,
“And yet at last had nothing to expect?
“While they their lives in joy and pleasure led,
“And then had nothing, at the end, to dread?
“Was all his priest with so much zeal convey'd,
“A part! a speech! for which the man was paid?
“And were his pious books, his solemn prayers,
“Not worth one tale of the admired Voltaire's?
“Then was it time, while yet some years remain'd,
“To drink untroubled and to think unchain'd,
“And on all pleasures, which his purse could give,
“Freely to seize, and while he lived, to live.”

Much time he passed in this important strife,
The bliss or bane of his remaining life;
For converts all are made with care and grief,
And pangs attend the birth of unbelief;
Nor pass they soon;—with awe and fear he took
The flow'ry way, and cast back many a look.

The youths applauded much his wise design,
With weighty reasoning o'er their evening wine;

And much in private 'twould their mirth improve,
To hear how Abel spake of life and love;
To hear him own what grievous pains it cost,
Ere the old saint was in the sinner lost,
Ere his poor mind with every deed alarm'd,
By wit was settled, and by vice was charm'd.

For Abel enter'd in his bold career,
Like boys on ice, with pleasure and with fear;
Lingering, yet longing for the joy, he went,
Repenting now, now dreading to repent:
With awkward pace, and with himself at war,
Far gone, yet frighten'd that he went so far;
Oft for his efforts he'd solicit praise,
And then proceed with blunders and delays:
The young more aptly passion's calls pursue,
But age and weakness start at scenes so new,
And tremble when they've done, for all they dared
to do.

At length example Abel's dread removed,
With small concern he sought the joys he loved;
Not resting here, he claim'd his share of fame,
And first their votary, then their wit became;
His jest was bitter and his satire bold,
When he his tales of formal brethren told;
What time with pious neighbours he discuss'd,
Their boasted treasure and their boundless trust:

“Such were our dreams,” the jovial elder cried;

“Awake and live,” his youthful friends replied.

Now the gay clerk a modest drab despised,
And clad him smartly as his friends advised;
So fine a coat upon his back he threw,
That not an alley-boy old Abel knew;
Broad polish'd buttons blazed that coat upon,
And just beneath the watch's trinkets shone,—
A splendid watch, that pointed out the time,
To fly from business and make free with crime:
The crimson waistcoat and the silken hose
Rank'd the lean man among the Borough beaux:
His raven hair he cropp'd with fierce disdain,
And light elastic locks encased his brain:
More pliant pupil who could hope to find,
So deck'd in person and so changed in mind?

When Abel walk'd the streets, with pleasant mien
He met his friends, delighted to be seen;
And when he rode along the public way,
No beau so gaudy and no youth so gay.

His pious sister, now an ancient maid,
For Abel fearing, first in secret pray'd;
Then thus in love and scorn her notions she convey'd:

“Alas! my brother! can I see thee pace
“Hoodwink'd to hell, and not lament thy case,
“Nor stretch my feeble hand to stop thy headlong race?

“ Lo ! thou art bound ; a slave in Satan’s chain,
“ The righteous Abel turn’d the wretched Cain ;
“ His brother’s blood against the murderer cried,
“ Against thee thine, unhappy suicide !
“ Are all our pious nights and peaceful days,
“ Our evening readings and our morning praise,
“ Our spirits’ comfort in the trials sent,
“ Our hearts’ rejoicings in the blessings lent,
“ All that o’er grief a cheering influence shed,
“ Are these for ever and for ever fled ?
“ When in the years gone by, the trying years,
“ When faith and hope had strife with wants and
fears,
“ Thy nerves have trembled till thou couldst not eat
“ (Dress’d by this hand) thy mess of simple meat ;
“ When, grieved by fastings, gall’d by fates severe,
“ Slow pass’d the days of the successless year ;
“ Still in these gloomy hours, my brother then
“ Had glorious views, unseen by prosperous men :
“ And when thy heart has felt its wish denied,
“ What gracious texts hast thou to grief applied ;
“ Till thou hast enter’d in thine humble bed,
“ By lofty hopes and heavenly musings fed ;
“ Then I have seen thy lively looks express
“ The spirit’s comforts in the man’s distress.
“ Then didst thou cry, exulting, ‘ Yes, ’tis fit,
“ ‘ ’Tis meet and right, my heart ! that we submit :’

“ And wilt thou, Abel, thy new pleasures weigh

“ Against such triumphs?—Oh! repent and pray.

“ What are thy pleasures?—with the gay to sit,

“ And thy poor brain torment for awkward wit;

“ All thy good thoughts (thou hat'st them) to restrain,

“ And give a wicked pleasure to the vain;

“ Thy long lean frame by fashion to attire,

“ That lads may laugh and wantons may admire;

“ To raise the mirth of boys, and not to see,

“ Unhappy maniac! that they laugh at thee.

“ These boyish follies, which alone the boy

“ Can idly act or gracefully enjoy,

“ Add new reproaches to thy fallen state,

“ And make men scorn what they would only hate.

“ What pains, my brother, dost thou take to prove

“ A taste for follies which thou canst not love?

“ Why do thy stiffening limbs the steed bestride—

“ That lads may laugh to see thou canst not ride?

“ And why (I feel the crimson tinge my cheek)

“ Dost thou by night in Diamond-Alley sneak?

“ Farewell! the parish will thy sister keep,

“ Where she in peace shall pray and sing and sleep,

“ Save when for thee she mourns, thou wicked, wan-
dering sheep!

“ When youth is fall'n, there's hope the young may
rise,

“ But fallen age for ever hopeless lies:

“ Torn up by storms and placed in earth once more,
“ The younger tree may sun and soil restore ;
“ But when the old and sapless trunk lies low,
“ No care or soil can former life bestow ;
“ Reserved for burning is the worthless tree ;
“ And what, O Abel ! is reserved for thee ? ”

These angry words our hero deeply felt,
Though hard his heart, and indisposed to melt !
To gain relief he took a glass the more,
And then went on as careless as before ;
Thenceforth, uncheck'd, amusements he partook,
And (save his ledger) saw no decent book ;
Him found the merchant punctual at his task,
And that perform'd, he'd nothing more to ask ;
He cared not how old Abel play'd the fool,
No master he, beyond the hours of school :
Thus they proceeding, had their wine and joke,
Till merchant Dixon felt a warning stroke,
And, after struggling half a gloomy week,
Left his poor clerk another friend to seek.

Alas ! the son, who led the saint astray,
Forgot the man whose follies made him gay ;
He cared no more for Abel in his need,
Than Abel cared about his hackney steed ;
He now, alas ! had all his earnings spent,
And thus was left to languish and repent ;

No school nor clerkship found he in the place,
Now lost to fortune, as before to grace.

For town-relief the grieving man applied,
And begg'd with tears what some with scorn denied;
Others look'd down upon the glowing vest,
And frowning, ask'd him at what price he dress'd?
Happy for him his country's laws are mild,
They must support him, though they still reviled;
Grieved, abject, scorn'd, insulted, and betray'd,
Of God unmindful, and of man afraid,—
No more he talk'd; 'twas pain, 'twas shame to speak,
His heart was sinking and his frame was weak.
His sister died with such serene delight,
He once again began to think her right;
Poor like himself, the happy spinster lay,
And sweet assurance bless'd her dying-day:
Poor like the spinster, he, when death was nigh,
Assured of nothing, felt afraid to die.
The cheerful clerks who sometimes pass'd the door,
Just mention'd "Abel!" and then thought no more
So Abel, pondering on his state forlorn,
Look'd round for comfort, and was chased by scorn.
And now we saw him on the beach reclined,
Or causeless walking in the wint'ry wind;
And when it raised a loud and angry sea,
He stood and gazed, in wretched reverie:

He heeded not the frost, the rain, the snow,
Close by the sea he walk'd alone and slow:
Sometimes his frame through many an hour he spread
Upon a tombstone, moveless as the dead;
And was there found a sad and silent place,
There would he creep with slow and measured pace:
Then would he wander by the river's side,
And fix his eyes upon the falling tide;
The deep dry ditch, the rushes in the fen,
And mossy crag-pits were his lodgings then:
There, to his discontented thoughts a prey,
The melancholy mortal pined away.

The neighb'ring poor at length began to speak
Of Abel's ramblings—he'd been gone a week;
They knew not where, and little care they took
For one so friendless and so poor to look;
At last a stranger, in a pedler's shed,
Beheld him hanging—he had long been dead.
He left a paper, penn'd at sundry times,
Intitled thus—"My Groanings and my Crimes!"

"I was a christian man, and none could lay
"Aught to my charge; I walk'd the narrow way:
"All then was simple faith, serene and pure,
"My hope was steadfast and my prospects sure;
"Then was I tried by want and sickness sore,
"But these I clapp'd my shield of faith before,
"And cares and wants and man's rebukes I bore:

“ Alas ! new foes assail’d me ; I was vain,
“ They stung my pride and they confused my brain :
“ Oh ! these deluders ! with what glee they saw
“ Their simple dupe transgress the righteous law ;
“ ’Twas joy to them to view that dreadful strife,
“ When faith and frailty warr’d for more than life ;
“ So with their pleasures they beguiled the heart,
“ Then with their logic they allay’d the smart ;
“ They proved (so thought I then) with reasons
 strong,
“ That no man’s feelings ever lead him wrong :
“ And thus I went, as on the varnish’d ice,
“ The smooth career of unbelief and vice.
“ Oft would the youths, with sprightly speech and
 bold,
“ Their witty tales of naughty priests unfold ;
“ ‘ ’Twas all a craft,’ they said, ‘ a cunning trade,
“ ‘ Not she the priests, but priests religion made :’
“ So I believed :”—No, Abel ! to thy grief,
So thou relinquish’dst all that was belief :—
“ I grew as very flint, and when the rest
“ Laugh’d at devotion, I enjoy’d the jest ;
“ But this all vanish’d like the morning-dew,
“ When unemploy’d, and poor again I grew ;
“ Yea ! I was doubly poor, for I was wicked too.
 “ The mouse that trespass’d and the treasure stole,
“ Found his lean body fitted to the hole ;

“ Till having fatted, he was forced to stay,
“ And, fasting, starve his stolen bulk away:
“ Ah! worse for me—grown poor, I yet remain
“ In sinful bonds, and pray and fast in vain.

“ At length I thought, although these friends of sin
“ Have spread their net and caught their prey therein;
“ Though my hard heart could not for mercy call,
“ Because, though great my grief, my faith was small;
“ Yet, as the sick on skilful men rely,
“ The soul diseased may to a doctor fly.

“ A famous one there was, whose skill had wrought
“ Cures past belief, and him the sinners sought;
“ Numbers there were defiled by mire and filth,
“ Whom he recover'd by his goodly tilth:—
“ ‘Come then,’ I said, ‘let me the man behold,
“ ‘And tell my case’—I saw him and I told.

“ With trembling voice, ‘Oh! reverend sir,’ I said,
“ ‘I once believed, and I was then misled;
“ ‘And now such doubts my sinful soul beset,
“ ‘I dare not say that I’m a Christian yet;
“ ‘Canst thou, good sir, by thy superior skill,
“ ‘Inform my judgment and direct my will?
“ ‘Ah! give thy cordial; let my soul have rest,
“ ‘And be the outward man alone distress’d;
“ ‘For at my state I tremble.’—‘Tremble more,’
“ Said the good man, ‘and then rejoice therefore;

“ ‘ ’Tis good to tremble ; prospects then are fair,
“ ‘ When the lost soul is plunged in deep despair :
“ ‘ Once thou wert simply honest, just and pure,
“ ‘ Whole, as thou thought’st, and never wish’d a cure :
“ ‘ Now thou hast plunged in folly, shame, disgrace ;
“ ‘ Now thou’rt an object meet for healing grace ;
“ ‘ No merit thine, no virtue, hope, belief,
“ ‘ Nothing hast thou, but misery, sin, and grief,
“ ‘ The best, the only titles to relief.’

“ ‘ What must I do,’ I said, ‘ my soul to free ?’
“ ‘ —Do nothing, man ; it will be done for thee.’—
“ ‘ But must I not, my reverend guide, believe ?’
“ ‘ —‘ If thou art call’d, thou wilt the faith receive :’—
“ ‘ But I repent not.’—Angry he replied,
“ ‘ If thou art call’d, thou needest nought beside :
“ ‘ Attend on us, and if ’tis Heaven’s decree,
“ ‘ The call will come,—if not, ah ! wo for thee.’

“ There then I waited, ever on the watch,
“ A spark of hope, a ray of light to catch ;
“ His words fell softly like the flakes of snow,
“ But I could never find my heart o’erflow :
“ He cried aloud, till in the flock began
“ The sigh, the tear, as caught from man to man ;
“ They wept and they rejoiced, and there was I,
“ Hard as a flint, and as the desert dry :
“ To me no tokens of the call would come,
“ I felt my sentence and received my doom ;

“ But I complain’d—‘ Let thy repinings cease,
“ ‘ Oh! man of sin, for they thy guilt increase;
“ ‘ It bloweth where it listeth;—die in peace.’
“ —‘ In peace, and perish?’ I replied; ‘ impart
“ ‘ Some better comfort to a burthen’d heart.’—
“ ‘ Alas!’ the priest return’d, ‘ can I direct
“ ‘ The heavenly call?—Do I proclaim th’ elect?
“ ‘ Raise not thy voice against th’ Eternal will,
“ ‘ But take thy part with sinners and be still ⁽¹⁾.’
“ Alas! for me, no more the times of peace
“ Are mine on earth—in death my pains may cease.
“ Foes to my soul! ye young seducers, know,
“ What serious ills from your amusements flow;
“ Opinions, you with so much ease profess,
“ O’erwhelm the simple and their minds oppress:
“ Let such be happy, nor with reasons strong,
“ That make them wretched, prove their notions
 wrong;
“ Let them proceed in that they deem the way,
“ Fast when they will, and at their pleasure pray:
“ Yes, I have pity for my brethren’s lot,
“ And so had Dives, but it help’d him not:
“ And is it thus?—I’m full of doubts:—Adieu!
“ Perhaps his reverence is mistaken too.”

"But I complain of—of the wrongs done to me—
"Oh! man of sin, for they thy guilt increase;
"It doth not where it lieth—'tis in power;
"Yet in power, and power I reprehend; in part
"I deem better comfort to a heart than I least
"Alas! the quiet rest of 'tis I direct
"The better way is—'tis I purchase the object;
"Hence not the voice against the liberal will;
"But take thy part with sinners and be still;
"Alas! for me no more the times of power
"Are mine on earth—in death my pains must cease.
"Hence to thy soul; ye young aspirants, know;
"Whence comes the true grandeur of the soul;
"Opinions, feel with so much ease, pursue;
"O'erwhelm the simple and their minds oppress;
"Let each be happy, not with reasons wrong;
"That shall then, stretched, prove their notions
"Wrong, not as I am, for I am wrong."
"Let them proceed in that they deem the way;
"Fast when they will, and at their pleasure pray;
"Yea, I have this lesson for their sake;
"And so had I, but it help'd him not;
"And is it thus?—in full of doubts;—Adieu!
"Perhaps his reverence is mistaken too."
"And so he said, and so he said, and so he said."
"And so he said, and so he said, and so he said."

NOTE TO LETTER XXI.

Note 1, page 151, line 9.

But take thy part with sinners and be still.

In a periodical work for the month of June last, the preceding dialogue is pronounced to be a most abominable caricature, if meant to be applied to Calvinists in general, and greatly distorted, if designed for an individual: now the author in his preface has declared, that he takes not upon him the censure of any sect or society for their opinions; and the lines themselves evidently point to an individual, whose sentiments they very fairly represent, without any distortion whatsoever. In a pamphlet intitled “A Cordial for a Sin-despairing Soul,” originally written by a teacher of religion, and lately re-published by another teacher of greater notoriety, the reader is informed that after he had full assurance of his salvation, the Spirit entered particularly into the subject with him; and, among many other matters of like nature, assured him that “his sins were fully and freely
“forgiven, as if they had never been committed; not for any act
“done by him, whether believing in Christ, or repenting of
“sin; nor yet for the sorrows and miseries he endured, nor for
“any service he should be called upon in his militant state, but
“for his own name and for his glory’s sake,” &c.* And the whole drift and tenour of the book is to the same purpose, viz.

* Cordial, &c. page 87.

the uselessness of all religious duties, such as prayer, contrition, fasting, and good works : he shows the evil done by reading such books as the *Whole Duty of Man*, and the *Practice of Piety* ; and complains heavily of his relation, an Irish bishop, who wanted him to join with the household in family prayer ; in fact, the whole work inculcates that sort of quietism which this dialogue alludes to, and that without any recommendation of attendance on the teachers of the Gospel, but rather holding forth encouragement to the supineness of man's nature ; by the information that he in vain looks for acceptance by the employment of his talents, and that his hopes of glory are rather extinguished than raised by any application to the means of grace.

In a periodical work for the month of June last, the preceding dialogue is pronounced to be a most admirable work. It is meant to be applied to Christians in general, and especially to those who are in the state of quietism ; now the author in his preface has declared, that he takes not upon him the concern of any sect or society for their opinions ; and the book themselves evidently point to an individual, whose sentiments they very fully represent, without any distinction whatever. It is a pamphlet intitled "A Cordial for a Sin-deceiving Soul," originally written by a teacher of religion, and lately re-published by another teacher of greater notoriety, the reader is informed that after he had full assurance of his salvation, the Spirit entered particularly into the subject with him ; and among many other points of like nature, assured him that "his sins were fully and freely forgiven, as if they had never been committed ; not for any act done by him, whether believing or unbelieving, or repenting or not ; not yet for the sorrow and misery he endured, nor for any service he should be called upon in the militant state, but for his own name and for his glory's sake." &c. &c. And the whole drift and tenor of the book is to the same purpose, viz.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XXII.

THE POOR OF THE BOROUGH.

PETER GRIMES.

_____ Was a sordid soul,

Such as does murder for a meed :

Who but for fear knows no control,

Because his conscience, sear'd and foul,

Feels not the import of the deed ;

One whose brute feeling ne'er aspires

Beyond his own more brute desires.

Scott. Marmion.

Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd

Came to my tent, and every one did threat——

Shakspeare. Richard III.

The times have been,

That when the brains were out, the man would die,

And there an end ; but now they rise again,

With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,

And push us from our stools.

Macbeth.

The Father of Peter a Fisherman—Peter's early Conduct—His Grief for the old Man—He takes an Apprentice—The Boy's Suffering and Fate—A second Boy : how he died—Peter acquitted—A third Apprentice—A Voyage by Sea : the Boy does not return—Evil Report on Peter : he is tried and threatened—Lives alone—His Melancholy and incipient Madness—Is observed and visited—He escapes and is taken : is lodged in a Parish-house : women attend and watch him—He speaks in a Delirium : grows more collected—His Account of his Feelings and visionary Terrors previous to his Death.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XXII.

PETER GRIMES.

OLD Peter Grimes made fishing his employ,
His wife he cabin'd with him and his boy,
And seem'd that life laborious to enjoy:
To town came quiet Peter with his fish,
And had of all a civil word and wish.
He left his trade upon the sabbath-day,
And took young Peter in his hand to pray:
But soon the stubborn boy from care broke loose,
At first refused, then added his abuse:
His father's love he scorn'd, his power defied,
But being drunk, wept sorely when he died.

Yes! then he wept, and to his mind there came
Much of his conduct, and he felt the shame,—
How he had oft the good old man reviled,
And never paid the duty of a child;
How, when the father in his Bible read,
He in contempt and anger left the shed:

“It is the word of life,” the parent cried;
—“This is the life itself,” the boy replied;
And while old Peter in amazement stood,
Gave the hot spirit to his boiling blood:—
How he, with oath and furious speech, began
To prove his freedom and assert the man;
And when the parent check’d his impious rage,
How he had cursed the tyranny of age,—
Nay, once had dealt the sacrilegious blow
On his bare head, and laid his parent low;
The father groan’d—“If thou art old,” said he,
“And hast a son—thou wilt remember me:
“Thy mother left me in a happy time,
“Thou kill’dst not her—Heav’n spares the double
crime.”

On an inn-settle, in his maudlin grief,
This he revolved, and drank for his relief.

Now lived the youth in freedom, but debarr’d
From constant pleasure, and he thought it hard;
Hard that he could not every wish obey,
But must awhile relinquish ale and play;
Hard! that he could not to his cards attend,
But must acquire the money he would spend.

With greedy eye he look’d on all he saw,
He knew not justice, and he laugh’d at law;
On all he mark’d, he stretch’d his ready hand;
He fish’d by water and he filch’d by land:

Oft in the night has Peter dropp'd his oar,
Fled from his boat and sought for prey on shore;
Oft up the hedge-row glided, on his back
Bearing the orchard's produce in a sack,
Or farm-yard load, tugg'd fiercely from the stack;
And as these wrongs to greater numbers rose,
The more he look'd on all men as his foes.

He built a mud-wall'd hovel, where he kept
His various wealth, and there he oft-times slept;
But no success could please his cruel soul,
He wish'd for one to trouble and control;
He wanted some obedient boy to stand
And bear the blow of his outrageous hand;
And hoped to find in some propitious hour
A feeling creature subject to his power.

Peter had heard there were in London then,—
Still have they being!—workhouse-clearing men,
Who, undisturb'd by feelings just or kind,
Would parish-boys to needy tradesmen bind:
They in their want a trifling sum would take,
And toiling slaves of piteous orphans make.

Such Peter sought, and when a lad was found,
The sum was dealt him, and the slave was bound.
Some few in town observed in Peter's trap
A boy, with jacket blue and woollen cap;

But none inquired how Peter used the rope,
Or what the bruise, that made the stripling stoop;
None could the ridges on his back behold,
None sought him shiv'ring in the winter's cold;
None put the question,—“Peter, dost thou give
“The boy his food?—What, man! the lad must live:
“Consider, Peter, let the child have bread,
“He'll serve thee better if he's stroked and fed.”
None reason'd thus—and some, on hearing cries,
Said calmly, “Grimes is at his exercise.”

Pinn'd, beaten, cold, pinch'd, threatened, and
abused—

His efforts punish'd and his food refused,—
Awake tormented,—soon aroused from sleep,—
Struck if he wept, and yet compell'd to weep,
The trembling boy dropp'd down and strove to pray,
Received a blow, and trembling turn'd away,
Or sobb'd and hid his piteous face;—while he,
The savage master, grinn'd in horrid glee:
He'd now the power he ever loved to show,
A feeling being subject to his blow.

Thus lived the lad, in hunger, peril, pain,
His tears despised, his supplications vain:
Compell'd by fear to lie, by need to steal,
His bed uneasy and unblest'd his meal,

For three sad years the boy his tortures bore,
And then his pains and trials were no more.

“How died he, Peter?” when the people said,
He growl’d—“I found him lifeless in his bed;”
Then tried for softer tone, and sigh’d, “Poor Sam is
dead.”

Yet murmurs were there, and some questions ask’d,—
How he was fed, how punish’d, and how task’d?
Much they suspected, but they little proved,
And Peter pass’d untroubled and unmoved.

Another boy with equal ease was found,
The money granted, and the victim bound;
And what his fate?—One night it chanced he fell
From the boat’s mast and perish’d in her well,
Where fish were living kept, and where the boy
(So reason’d men) could not himself destroy:—

“Yes! so it was,” said Peter, “in his play,
“ (For he was idle both by night and day,)
“ He climb’d the main-mast and then fell below ;”—
Then show’d his corpse and pointed to the blow :
“ What said the jury ?”—they were long in doubt,
But sturdy Peter faced the matter out :
So they dismiss’d him, saying at the time,
“ Keep fast your hatchway when you’ve boys who
climb.”

This hit the conscience, and he colour'd more
Than for the closest questions put before.

Thus all his fears the verdict set aside,
And at the slave-shop Peter still applied.

Then came a boy, of manners soft and mild,—
Our seamen's wives with grief beheld the child;
All thought (the poor themselves) that he was one
Of gentle blood, some noble sinner's son,
Who had, belike, deceived some humble maid,
Whom he had first seduced and then betray'd:—
However this, he seem'd a gracious lad,
In grief submissive and with patience sad.

Passive he labour'd, till his slender frame
Bent with his loads, and he at length was lame:
Strange that a frame so weak could bear so long
The grossest insult and the foulest wrong;
But there were causes—in the town they gave
Fire, food, and comfort, to the gentle slave;
And though stern Peter, with a cruel hand,
And knotted rope, enforced the rude command,
Yet he consider'd what he'd lately felt,
And his vile blows with selfish pity dealt.

One day such draughts the cruel fisher made,
He could not vend them in his borough-trade,
But sail'd for London-mart: the boy was ill,
But ever humbled to his master's will;

And on the river, where they smoothly sail'd,
He strove with terror and awhile prevail'd;
But new to danger on the angry sea,
He clung affrighten'd to his master's knee:
The boat grew leaky and the wind was strong,
Rough was the passage and the time was long;
His liquor fail'd, and Peter's wrath arose,—
No more is known—the rest we must suppose,
Or learn of Peter;—Peter says, he “spied
“The stripling's danger and for harbour tried;
“Meantime the fish, and then th'apprentice died.”

The pitying women raised a clamour round,
And weeping said, “Thou hast thy 'prentice drown'd.”

Now the stern man was summon'd to the hall,
To tell his tale before the burghers all:
He gave th'account; profess'd the lad he loved,
And kept his brazen features all unmoved.

The mayor himself with tone severe replied,—
“Henceforth with thee shall never boy abide;
“Hire thee a freeman, whom thou durst not beat,
“But who, in thy despite, will sleep and eat:
“Free thou art now!—again shouldst thou appear,
“Thou'lt find thy sentence, like thy soul, severe.”

Alas! for Peter not a helping hand,
So was he hated, could he now command;
Alone he row'd his boat, alone he cast
His nets beside, or made his anchor fast;

To hold a rope or hear a curse was none,—
He toil'd and rail'd; he groan'd and swore alone.

Thus by himself compell'd to live each day,
To wait for certain hours the tide's delay;
At the same times the same dull views to see,
The bounding marsh-bank and the blighted tree;
The water only, when the tides were high,
When low, the mud half-cover'd and half-dry;
The sun-burnt tar that blisters on the planks,
And bank-side stakes in their uneven ranks;
Heaps of entangled weeds that slowly float,
As the tide rolls by the impeded boat.

When tides were neap, and, in the sultry day,
Through the tall bounding mud-banks made their way,
Which on each side rose swelling, and below
The dark warm flood ran silently and slow;
There anchoring, Peter chose from man to hide,
There hang his head, and view the lazy tide
In its hot slimy channel slowly glide;
Where the small eels that left the deeper way
For the warm shore, within the shallows play;
Where gaping muscles, left upon the mud,
Slope their slow passage to the fallen flood;—
Here dull and hopeless he'd lie down and trace
How sidelong crabs had scrawl'd their crooked race;
Or sadly listen to the tuneless cry
Of fishing gull or clanging golden-eye;

What time the sea-birds to the marsh would come,
And the loud bittern, from the bull-rush home,
Gave from the salt-ditch side the bellowing boom:
He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce,
And loved to stop beside the opening sluice;
Where the small stream, confined in narrow bound,
Ran with a dull, unvaried, sadd'ning sound;
Where all, presented to the eye or ear,
Oppress'd the soul with misery, grief, and fear.

Besides these objects, there were places three,
Which Peter seem'd with certain dread to see;
When he drew near them he would turn from each,
And loudly whistle till he pass'd the reach*.

A change of scene to him brought no relief,
In town, 'twas plain, men took him for a thief:
The sailors' wives would stop him in the street,
And say, "Now, Peter, thou'st no boy to beat:"
Infants at play, when they perceived him, ran,
Warning each other—"That's the wicked man:"
He growl'd an oath, and in an angry tone
Cursed the whole place and wish'd to be alone.

Alone he was, the same dull scenes in view,
And still more gloomy in his sight they grew:

* The reaches in a river are those parts which extend from point to point. Johnson has not the word precisely in this sense; but it is very common, and I believe used wheresoever a navigable river can be found in this country.

Though man he hated, yet employ'd alone
At bootless labour, he would swear and groan,
Cursing the shoals that glided by the spot,
And gulls that caught them when his arts could not.

Cold nervous tremblings shook his sturdy frame,
And strange disease—he couldn't say the name;
Wild were his dreams, and oft he rose in fright,
Waked by his view of horrors in the night,—
Horrors that would the sternest minds amaze,
Horrors that demons might be proud to raise:
And though he felt forsaken, grieved at heart,
To think he lived from all mankind apart;
Yet, if a man approach'd, in terrors he would start.

A winter pass'd since Peter saw the town,
And summer-lodgers were again come down;
These, idly curious, with their glasses spied
The ships in bay as anchor'd for the tide,—
The river's craft,—the bustle of the quay,—
And sea-port views, which landmen love to see.

One, up the river, had a man and boat
Seen day by day, now anchor'd, now afloat;
Fisher he seem'd, yet used no net nor hook;
Of sea-fowl swimming by no heed he took,
But on the gliding waves still fix'd his lazy look:
At certain stations he would view the stream,
As if he stood bewildered in a dream,

Or that some power had chain'd him for a time,
To feel a curse or meditate on crime.

This known, some curious, some in pity went,
And others question'd—"Wretch, dost thou repent?"
He heard, he trembled, and in fear resign'd
His boat: new terror fill'd his restless mind;
Furious he grew, and up the country ran,
And there they seized him—a distemper'd man:—
Him we received, and to a parish-bed,
Follow'd and cursed, the groaning man was led.

Here when they saw him, whom they used to shun,
A lost, lone man, so harass'd and undone;
Our gentle females, ever prompt to feel,
Perceived compassion on their anger steal;
His crimes they could not from their memories blot,
But they were grieved, and trembled at his lot.

A priest too came, to whom his words are told;
And all the signs they shudder'd to behold.

"Look! look!" they cried; "his limbs with horror
shake,

"And as he grinds his teeth, what noise they make!
"How glare his angry eyes, and yet he's not awake:
"See! what cold drops upon his forehead stand,
"And how he clenches that broad bony hand."

The priest attending, found he spoke at times
As one alluding to his fears and crimes:

“ It was the fall,” he mutter’d, “ I can show
“ The manner how—I never struck a blow:”—
And then aloud—“ Unhand me, free my chain;
“ On oath, he fell—it struck him to the brain:—
“ Why ask my father?—that old man will swear
“ Against my life; besides, he wasn’t there:—
“ What, all agreed?—Am I to die to-day?—
“ My Lord, in mercy, give me time to pray.”

Then as they watch’d him, calmer he became,
And grew so weak he couldn’t move his frame,
But murmuring spake,—while they could see and hear
The start of terror and the groan of fear;
See the large dew-beads on his forehead rise,
And the cold death-drop glaze his sunken eyes;
Nor yet he died, but with unwonted force
Seem’d with some fancied being to discourse:
He knew not us, or with accustom’d art
He hid the knowledge, yet exposed his heart;
’Twas part confession and the rest defence,
A madman’s tale, with gleams of waking sense.

“ I’ll tell you all,” he said, “ the very day
“ When the old man first placed them in my way:
“ My father’s spirit—he who always tried
“ To give me trouble, when he lived and died—
“ When he was gone, he could not be content
“ To see my days in painful labour spent,

“ But would appoint his meetings, and he made
“ Me watch at these, and so neglect my trade.
“ ’Twas one hot noon, all silent, still, serene,
“ No living being had I lately seen;
“ I paddled up and down and dipp’d my net,
“ But (such his pleasure) I could nothing get,—
“ A father’s pleasure, when his toil was done,
“ To plague and torture thus an only son!
“ And so I sat and look’d upon the stream,
“ How it ran on, and felt as in a dream:
“ But dream it was not; no!—I fix’d my eyes
“ On the mid stream and saw the spirits rise;
“ I saw my father on the water stand,
“ And hold a thin pale boy in either hand;
“ And there they glided ghastly on the top
“ Of the salt flood, and never touch’d a drop:
“ I would have struck them, but they knew th’intent,
“ And smiled upon the oar, and down they went.
“ Now, from that day, whenever I began
“ To dip my net, there stood the hard old man—
“ He and those boys: I humbled me and pray’d
“ They would be gone;—they heeded not, but stay’d:
“ Nor could I turn, nor would the boat go by,
“ But gazing on the spirits, there was I:
“ They bade me leap to death, but I was loth to die:

“ And every day, as sure as day arose,
“ Would these three spirits meet me ere the close;
“ To hear and mark them daily was my doom,
“ And ‘Come,’ they said, with weak, sad voices, ‘come.’
“ To row away with all my strength I try’d,
“ But there were they, hard by me in the tide,
“ The three unbodied forms—and ‘Come,’ still ‘come,’
they cried.

“ Fathers should pity—but this old man shook
“ His hoary locks, and froze me by a look:
“ Thrice, when I struck them, through the water came
“ A hollow groan, that weaken’d all my frame:
“ ‘Father!’ said I, ‘have mercy:’—He replied,
“ I know not what—the angry spirit lied,—
“ ‘Didst thou not draw thy knife?’ said he:—’Twas
true,

“ But I had pity and my arm withdrew:
“ He cried for mercy which I kindly gave,
“ But he has no compassion in his grave.
“ There were three places, where they ever rose,—
“ The whole long river has not such as those,—
“ Places accursed, where, if a man remain,
“ He’ll see the things which strike him to the brain;
“ And there they made me on my paddle lean,
“ And look at them for hours;—accursed scene!

“ When they would glide to that smooth eddy-space,
“ Then bid me leap and join them in the place ;
“ And at my groans each little villain sprite
“ Enjoy’d my pains and vanish’d in delight.

“ In one fierce summer-day, when my poor brain
“ Was burning hot and cruel was my pain,
“ Then came this father-foe, and there he stood
“ With his two boys again upon the flood ;
“ There was more mischief in their eyes, more glee
“ In their pale faces when they glared at me :
“ Still did they force me on the oar to rest,
“ And when they saw me fainting and oppress’d,
“ He, with his hand, the old man, scoop’d the flood,
“ And there came flame about him mix’d with blood ;
“ He bade me stoop and look upon the place,
“ Then flung the hot-red liquor in my face ;
“ Burning it blazed, and then I roar’d for pain,
“ I thought the demons would have turn’d my brain.

“ Still there they stood, and forced me to behold
“ A place of horrors—they cannot be told—
“ Where the flood open’d, there I heard the shriek
“ Of tortured guilt—no earthly tongue can speak :
“ ‘ All days alike ! for ever ! ’ did they say,
“ ‘ And unremitted torments every day ’—
“ Yes, so they said : ”—But here he ceased and gazed
On all around, affrighten’d and amazed ;

And still he tried to speak, and look'd in dread
Of frighten'd females gathering round his bed;
Then dropp'd exhausted and appear'd at rest,
Till the strong foe the vital powers possess'd;
Then with an inward, broken voice he cried,
“Again they come,” and mutter'd as he died.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XXIII.

PRISONS.

Pœna autem vehemens ac multò sævior illis,
Quas et Cæditius gravis invenit aut Rhadamanthus,
Nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.

Juvenal. Sat. 13. l. 197.

Think my former state a happy dream,
From which awaked, the truth of what we are
Shows us but this,—I am sworn brother now
To grim Necessity, and he and I
Will keep a league till death.

Richard II.

The Mind of Man accommodates itself to all Situations ; Prisons otherwise would be intolerable—Debtors : their different Kinds : three particularly described ; others more briefly—An arrested Prisoner : his Account of his Feelings and his Situation—The Alleviations of a Prison—Prisoners for Crimes—Two condemned : a vindictive Female : a Highwayman—The Interval between Condemnation and Execution—His Feelings as the Time approaches—His Dream.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XXIII.

PRISONS.

'Tis well—that man to all the varying states
Of good and ill his mind accommodates;
He not alone progressive grief sustains,
But soon submits to unexperienced pains:
Change after change, all climes his body bears;
His mind repeated shocks of changing cares:
Faith and fair virtue arm the nobler breast;
Hope and mere want of feeling aid the rest,
Or who could bear to lose the balmy air
Of summer's breath, from all things fresh and fair,
With all that man admires or loves below;
All earth and water, wood and vale bestow,
Wherewith pleasures smile, whence real blessings flow;
With sight and sound of every kind that lives,
And crowning all with joy that freedom gives?

Who could from these, in some unhappy day,
Bear to be drawn by ruthless arms away,
To the vile nuisance of a noisome room,
Where only insolence and misery come?
(Save that the curious will by chance appear,
Or some in pity drop a fruitless tear;)
To a damp prison, where the very sight
Of the warm sun is favour and not right;
Where all we hear or see the feelings shock,
The oath and groan, the fetter and the lock?

Who could bear this and live?—Oh! many a year
All this is borne, and miseries more severe;
And some there are, familiar with the scene,
Who live in mirth, though few become serene.

Far as I might the inward man perceive,
There was a constant effort—not to grieve;
Not to despair, for better days would come,
And the freed debtor smile again at home:
Subdued his habits, he may peace regain,
And bless the woes that were not sent in vain.

Thus might we class the debtors here confined,
The more deceived, the more deceitful kind;
Here are the guilty race, who mean to live
On credit, that credulity will give;
Who purchase, conscious they can never pay;
Who know their fate, and traffic to betray;

On whom no pity, fear, remorse, prevail,
Their aim a statute, their resource a jail;—
These as the public spoilers we regard,
No dun so harsh, no creditor so hard.

A second kind are they, who truly strive
To keep their sinking credit long alive;
Success, nay prudence, they may want, but yet
They would be solvent, and deplore a debt;
All means they use, to all expedients run,
And are by slow, sad steps, at last undone:
Justly, perhaps, you blame their want of skill,
But mourn their feelings and absolve their will.

There is a debtor, who his trifling *all*
Spreads in a shop; it would not fill a stall:
There at one window his temptation lays,
And in new modes disposes and displays:
Above the door you shall his name behold,
And what he vends in ample letters told,
The words *repository, warehouse*, all
He uses to enlarge concerns so small:
He to his goods assigns some beauty's name,
Then in her reign, and hopes they'll share her fame;
And talks of credit, commerce, traffic, trade,
As one important by their profit made;
But who can paint the vacancy, the gloom,
And spare dimensions of one backward room?

Wherein he dines, if so 'tis fit to speak,
Of one day's herring and the morrow's steak;
An anchorite in diet, all his care
Is to display his stock and vend his ware.

Long waiting hopeless, then he tries to meet
A kinder fortune in a distant street;
There he again displays, increasing yet
Corroding sorrow and consuming debt:
Alas! he wants the requisites to rise—
The true connexions, the availing ties;
They who proceed on certainties advance,
These are not times when men prevail by chance:
But still he tries, till, after years of pain,
He finds, with anguish, he has tried in vain.
Debtors are these on whom 'tis hard to press,
'Tis base, impolitic, and merciless.

To these we add a miscellaneous kind,
By pleasure, pride, and indolence confined;
Those whom no calls, no warnings could divert,
The unexperienced and the inexperienced;
The builder, idler, schemer, gamester, sot,—
The follies different, but the same their lot;
Victims of horses, lasses, drinking, dice,
Of every passion, humour, whim, and vice.

See! that sad merchant, who but yesterday
Had a vast household in command and pay;

He now entreats permission to employ
A boy he needs, and then entreats the boy.

And there sits one, improvident but kind,
Bound for a friend, whom honour could not bind ;
Sighing, he speaks to any who appear,
“ A treach’rous friend—’twas that which sent me here:
“ I was too kind,—I thought I could depend
“ On his bare word—he was a treach’rous friend.”

A female too !—it is to her a home,
She came before—and she again will come :
Her friends have pity ; when their anger drops,
They take her home ;—she’s tried her schools and
shops—

Plan after plan ;—but fortune would not mend,
She to herself was still the treach’rous friend ;
And wheresoe’er began, all here was sure to end :
And there she sits as thoughtless and as gay,
As if she’d means, or not a debt to pay—
Or knew to-morrow she’d be call’d away—
Or felt a shilling and could dine to-day.

While thus observing, I began to trace
The sober’d features of a well-known face—
Looks once familiar, manners form’d to please,
And all illumined by a heart at ease :
But fraud and flattery ever claim’d a part
(Still unresisted) of that easy heart ;

But he at length beholds me—"Ah! my friend!

"And have thy pleasures this unlucky end?"

"Too sure," he said, and smiling as he sigh'd;

"I went astray, though prudence seem'd my guide;

"All she proposed I in my heart approved,

"And she was honour'd, but my pleasure loved—

"Pleasure, the mistress to whose arms I fled,

"From wife-like lectures angry prudence read.

"Why speak the madness of a life like mine,

"The powers of beauty, novelty, and wine?

"Why paint the wanton smile, the venal vow,

"Or friends whose worth I can appreciate now?

"Oft I perceived my fate, and then would say,

"I'll think to-morrow, I must live to-day:

"So am I here—I own the laws are just—

"And here, where thought is painful, think I must:

"But speech is pleasant, this discourse with thee

"Brings to my mind the sweets of liberty,

"Breaks on the sameness of the place, and gives

"The doubtful heart conviction that it lives.

"Let me describe my anguish in the hour

"When law detain'd me and I felt its power.

"When in that shipwreck, this I found my shore,

"And join'd the wretched, who were wreck'd before;

"When I perceived each feature in the face,

"Pinch'd through neglect or turbid by disgrace;

“ When in these wasting forms affliction stood
“ In my afflicted view, it chill’d my blood;—
“ And forth I rush’d, a quick retreat to make,
“ Till a loud laugh proclaim’d the dire mistake:
“ But when the groan had settled to a sigh,
“ When gloom became familiar to the eye,
“ When I perceive how others seem to rest,
“ With every evil rankling in my breast,—
“ Led by example, I put on the man,
“ Sing off my sighs, and trifle as I can.

“ Homer! nay Pope! (for never will I seek
“ Applause for learning—nought have I with Greek)
“ Gives us the secrets of his pagan hell,
“ Where ghost with ghost in sad communion dwell;
“ Where shade meets shade, and round the gloomy meads
“ They glide and speak of old heroic deeds,—
“ What fields they conquer’d, and what foes they slew
“ And sent to join the melancholy crew.

“ When a new spirit in that world was found,
“ A thousand shadowy forms came flitting round;
“ Those who had known him, fond inquiries made,—
“ ‘ Of all we left, inform us, gentle shade,
“ ‘ Now as we lead thee in our realms to dwell,
“ ‘ Our twilight groves, and meads of asphodel.’

“ What paints the poet, is our station here,
“ Where we like ghosts and flitting shades appear:

“ This is the hell he sings, and here we meet,
“ And former deeds to new-made friends repeat;
“ Heroic deeds, which here obtain us fame,
“ And are in fact the causes why we came:
“ Yes! this dim region is old Homer’s hell,
“ Abate but groves and meads of asphodel.

“ Here, when a stranger from your world we spy,
“ We gather round him and for news apply;
“ He hears unheeding, nor can speech endure,
“ But shivering gazes on the vast obscure:
“ We smiling pity, and by kindness show
“ We felt his feelings and his terrors know;
“ Then speak of comfort—time will give him sight,
“ Where now ’tis dark; where now ’tis wo—delight.

“ ‘ Have hope,’ we say, ‘ and soon the place to thee
“ ‘ Shall not a prison but a castle be:
“ ‘ When to the wretch whom care and guilt confound,
“ ‘ The world’s a prison, with a wider bound;
“ ‘ Go where he may, he feels himself confined,
“ ‘ And wears the fetters of an abject mind.’

“ But now adieu! those giant-keys appear,
“ Thou art not worthy to be inmate here:
“ Go to thy world, and to the young declare
“ What we, our spirits and employments, are;
“ Tell them how we the ills of life endure,
“ Our empire stable, and our state secure;

“ Our dress, our diet, for their use describe,
“ And bid them haste to join the gen’rous tribe :
“ Go to thy world, and leave us here to dwell,
“ Who to its joys and comforts bid farewell.”

Farewell to these ; but other scenes I view,
And other griefs, and guilt of deeper hue ;
Where conscience gives to outward ills her pain,
Gloom to the night, and pressure to the chain :
Here separate cells awhile in misery keep
Two doom’d to suffer : there they strive for sleep ;
By day indulged, in larger space they range,
Their bondage certain, but their bounds have change.

One was a female, who had grievous ill
Wrought in revenge, and she enjoy’d it still :
With death before her, and her fate in view,
Unsated vengeance in her bosom grew :
Sullen she was and threat’ning ; in her eye
Glared the stern triumph that she dared to die :
But first a being in the world must leave—
’Twas once reproach ; ’twas now a short reprieve.

She was a pauper bound, who early gave
Her mind to vice and doubly was a slave ;
Upbraided, beaten, held by rough control,
Revenge sustain’d, inspired, and fill’d her soul :
She fired a full-stored barn, confess’d the fact,
And laugh’d at law and justified the act :

Our gentle vicar tried his powers in vain,
She answer'd not, or answer'd with disdain;
Th' approaching fate she heard without a sigh,
And neither cared to live nor fear'd to die.

Not so he felt, who with her was to pay
The forfeit, life—with dread he view'd the day,
And that short space which yet for him remain'd,
Till with his limbs his faculties were chain'd:
He paced his narrow bounds some ease to find,
But found it not,—no comfort reach'd his mind:
Each sense was palsied; when he tasted food,
He sigh'd and said, “ Enough—’tis very good.”
Since his dread sentence, nothing seem'd to be
As once it was—he seeing could not see,
Nor hearing, hear aright;—when first I came
Within his view, I fancied there was shame,
I judged resentment; I mistook the air,—
These fainter passions live not with despair;
Or but exist and die:—Hope, fear, and love,
Joy, doubt, and hate, may other spirits move,
But touch not his, who every waking hour
Has one fix'd dread, and always feels its power.

“ But will not mercy?”—No! she cannot plead
For such an outrage;—’twas a cruel deed:
He stopp'd a timid traveller;—to his breast,
With oaths and curses, was the danger press'd:—

No ! he must suffer ; pity we may find
For one man's pangs, but must not wrong mankind.

Still I behold him, every thought employ'd
On one dire view !—all others are destroy'd ;
This makes his features ghastly, gives the tone
Of his few words resemblance to a groan :
He takes his tasteless food, and when 'tis done,
Counts up his meals, now lessen'd by that one ;
For expectation is on time intent,
Whether he brings us joy or punishment.

Yes ! e'en in sleep the impressions all remain,
He hears the sentence and he feels the chain ;
He sees the judge and jury, when he shakes,
And loudly cries, " Not guilty," and awakes :
Then chilling tremblings o'er his body creep,
Till worn-out nature is compell'd to sleep.

Now comes the dream again ; it shows each scene,
With each small circumstance that comes between—
The call to suffering and the very deed—
There crowds go with him, follow, and precede ;
Some heartless shout, some pity, all condemn,
While he in fancied envy looks at them :
He seems the place for that sad act to see,
And dreams the very thirst which then will be :
A priest attends—it seems, the one he knew
In his best days, beneath whose care he grew.

At this his terrors take a sudden flight,
He sees his native village with delight;
The house, the chamber, where he once array'd
His youthful person; where he knelt and pray'd:
Then too the comforts he enjoy'd at home,
The days of joy; the joys themselves are come;—
The hours of innocence;—the timid look
Of his loved maid, when first her hand he took
And told his hope; her trembling joy appears,
Her forced reserve and his retreating fears.

All now is present;—'tis a moment's gleam
Of former sunshine—stay, delightful dream!
Let him within his pleasant garden walk,
Give him her arm, of blessings let them talk.

Yes! all are with him now, and all the while
Life's early prospects and his Fanny's smile:
Then come his sister and his village-friend,
And he will now the sweetest moments spend
Life has to yield;—No! never will he find
Again on earth such pleasure in his mind:
He goes through shrubby walks these friends among,
Love in their looks and honour on the tongue:
Nay, there's a charm beyond what nature shows,
The bloom is softer and more sweetly glows;—
Pierced by no crime, and urged by no desire
For more than true and honest hearts require,

They feel the calm delight, and thus proceed
Through the green lane,—then linger in the mead,—
Stray o'er the heath in all its purple bloom,—
And pluck the blossom where the wild bees hum;
Then through the broomy bound with ease they pass,
And press the sandy sheep-walk's slender grass,
Where dwarfish flowers among the gorse are spread,
And the lamb browses by the linnet's bed;
Then 'cross the bounding brook they make their way
O'er its rough bridge—and there behold the bay!—
The ocean smiling to the fervid sun—
The waves that faintly fall and slowly run—
The ships at distance and the boats at hand;
And now they walk upon the sea-side sand,
Counting the number and what kind they be,
Ships softly sinking in the sleepy sea:
Now arm in arm, now parted, they behold
The glitt'ring waters on the shingles roll'd:
The timid girls, half dreading their design,
Dip the small foot in the retarded brine,
And search for crimson weeds, which spreading flow,
Or lie like pictures on the sand below;
With all those bright red pebbles that the sun
Through the small waves so softly shines upon;
And those live lucid jellies which the eye
Delights to trace as they swim glitt'ring by:

Pearl-shells and rubied star-fish they admire,
And will arrange above the parlour-fire,—
'Tokens of bliss!—" Oh ! horrible ! a wave
" Roars as it rises—save me, Edward ! save !"
She cries :—Alas ! the watchman on his way
Calls and lets in—truth, terror, and the day !

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XXIV.

SCHOOLS.

Tu quoque ne metuas, quamvis schola verbere multo
Increpet et truculenta senex geret ora magister;
Degeneres animos timor arguit; at tibi consta
Intrepidus, nec te clamor plagæque sonantes,
Nec matutinis agitet formido sub horis,
Quòd sceptrum vibrat ferulæ, quòd multa supellex
Virgea, quòd molis scuticam prætexit aluta,
Quòd fervent trepido subsellia vestra tumultu,
Pompa loci, et vani fugiatur scena timoris.

Ausonius in Protreptico ad Nepotem.

Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,—
We love the play-place of our early days;
The scene is touching, and the heart is stone
That feels not at that sight—and feels at none.
The wall on which we tried our graving skill;
The very name we carved subsisting still;
The bench on which we sat while deep employ'd,
Though mangled, hack'd, and hew'd, yet not destroy'd.
The little ones unbutton'd, glowing hot,
Playing our games, and on the very spot;
As happy as we once to kneel and draw
The chalky ring and knuckle down at taw.
This fond attachment to the well-known place,
When first we started into life's long race,
Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
We feel it e'en in age and at our latest day.

Cowper.

Schools of every Kind to be found in the Borough—The School for Infants—The School Preparatory: the Sagacity of the Mistress in foreseeing Character—Day-Schools of the lower Kind—A Master with Talents adapted to such Pupils: one of superior Qualifications—Boarding-Schools: that for young Ladies: one going first to the Governess, one finally returning Home—School for Youth: Master and Teacher; various Dispositions and Capacities—The Miser-Boy—The Boy-Bully—Sons of Farmers: how amused—What Study will effect, examined—A College Life: one sent from his College to a Benefice; one retained there in Dignity—The Advantages in either Case not considerable—Where then the Good of a literary Life?—Answered—Conclusion.

THE BOROUGH.

LETTER XXIV.

SCHOOLS.

To every class we have a school assign'd,
Rules for all ranks and food for every mind :
Yet one there is, that small regard to rule
Or study pays, and still is deem'd a school ;
That, where a deaf, poor, patient widow sits,
And awes some thirty infants as she knits ;
Infants of humble, busy wives, who pay
Some trifling price for freedom through the day.
At this good matron's hut the children meet,
Who thus becomes the mother of the street :
Her room is small, they cannot widely stray,—
Her threshold high, they cannot run away :
Though deaf, she sees the rebel-heroes shout,—
Though lame, her white rod nimbly walks about ;
With band of yarn she keeps offenders in,
And to her gown the sturdiest rogue can pin :

Aided by these, and spells, and tell-tale birds,
Her power they dread and reverence her words.

To learning's second seats we now proceed,
Where humming students gilded primers read;
Or books with letters large and pictures gay,
To make their reading but a kind of play—
“Reading made Easy,” so the titles tell;
But they who read must first begin to spell:
There may be profit in these arts, but still
Learning is labour, call it what you will;
Upon the youthful mind a heavy load,
Nor must we hope to find the royal road.
Some will their easy steps to science show,
And some to heav'n itself their by-way know;
Ah! trust them not,—who fame or bliss would share,
Must learn by labour, and must live by care.

Another matron of superior kind,
For higher schools prepares the rising mind;
Preparatory she her learning calls,
The step first made to colleges and halls.

She early sees to what the mind will grow,
Nor abler judge of infant-powers I know;
She sees what soon the lively will impede,
And how the steadier will in turn succeed;
Observes the dawn of wisdom, fancy, taste,
And knows what parts will wear and what will waste:

She marks the mind too lively, and at once
Sees the gay coxcomb and the rattling dunce.

Long has she lived, and much she loves to trace
Her former pupils, now a lordly race;
Whom when she sees rich robes and furs bedeck,
She marks the pride which once she strove to check:
A burgess comes, and she remembers well
How hard her task to make his worship spell;
Cold, selfish, dull, inanimate, unkind,
'Twas but by anger he display'd a mind:
Now civil, smiling, complaisant, and gay,
The world has worn th' unsocial crust away;
That sullen spirit now a softness wears,
And, save by fits, e'en dulness disappears:
But still the matron can the man behold,
Dull, selfish, hard, inanimate, and cold.
A merchant passes,—“ probity and truth,
“ Prudence and patience, mark'd thee from thy youth.”
Thus she observes, but oft retains her fears
For him, who now with name unstain'd appears;
Nor hope relinquishes, for one who yet
Is lost in error and involved in debt;
For latent evil in that heart she found,
More open here, but here the core was sound.

Various our day-schools: here behold we one
Empty and still:—the morning duties done,

Soil'd, tatter'd, worn, and thrown in various heaps,
Appear their books, and there confusion sleeps;
The workmen all are from the Babel fled,
And lost their tools, till the return they dread:
Meantime the master, with his wig awry,
Prepares his books for business by-and-by:
Now all th'insignia of the monarch laid
Beside him rest, and none stand by afraid;
He, while his troop light-hearted leap and play,
Is all intent on duties of the day;
No more the tyrant stern or judge severe,
He feels the father's and the husband's fear.

Ah! little think the timid trembling crowd,
That one so wise, so powerful, and so proud,
Should feel himself, and dread the humble ills
Of rent-day charges and of coalman's bills;
That while they mercy from their judge implore,
He fears himself—a knocking at the door;
And feels the burthen as his neighbour states
His humble portion to the parish-rates.

They sit th'allotted hours, then eager run,
Rushing to pleasure when the duty's done;
His hour of leisure is of different kind,
Then cares domestic rush upon his mind,
And half the ease and comfort he enjoys,
Is when surrounded by slates, books, and boys.

Poor Reuben Dixon has the noisiest school
Of ragged lads, who ever bow'd to rule;
Low in his price—the men who heave our coals,
And clean our causeways, send him boys in shoals:
To see poor Reuben, with his fry beside,—
Their half-check'd rudeness and his half-scorn'd
pride,—

Their room, the sty in which th' assembly meet,
In the close lane behind the Northgate-street;
T' observe his vain attempts to keep the peace,
Till tolls the bell, and strife and troubles cease,—
Calls for our praise; his labour praise deserves,
But not our pity; Reuben has no nerves:
'Mid noise and dirt, and stench, and play, and prate,
He calmly cuts the pen or views the slate.

But Leonard!—yes, for Leonard's fate I grieve,
Who loathes the station which he dares not leave;
He cannot dig, he will not beg his bread,
All his dependence rests upon his head;
And deeply skill'd in sciences and arts,
On vulgar lads he wastes superior parts.

Alas! what grief that feeling mind sustains,
In guiding hands and stirring torpid brains;
He whose proud mind from pole to pole will move,
And view the wonders of the worlds above;
Who thinks and reasons strongly:—hard his fate,
Confined for ever to the pen and slate;

True, he submits, and when the long dull day
Has slowly pass'd, in weary tasks, away,
To other worlds with cheerful view he looks,
And parts the night between repose and books.

Amid his labours, he has sometimes tried
To turn a little from his cares aside;
Pope, Milton, Dryden, with delight has seized,
His soul engaged and of his trouble eased:
When, with a heavy eye and ill-done sum,
No part conceived, a stupid boy will come;
Then Leonard first subdues the rising frown,
And bids the blockhead lay his blunders down;
O'er which disgusted he will turn his eye,
To his sad duty his sound mind apply,
And, vex'd in spirit, throw his pleasures by.

Turn we to schools which more than these afford—
The sound instruction and the wholesome board;
And first our school for ladies:—pity calls
For one soft sigh, when we behold these walls,
Placed near the town, and where, from window high,
The fair, confined, may our free crowds espy,
With many a stranger gazing up and down,
And all the envied tumult of the town;
May, in the smiling summer-eve, when they
Are sent to sleep the pleasant hours away,
Behold the poor (whom they conceive the bless'd)
Employ'd for hours, and grieved they cannot rest.

Here the fond girl, whose days are sad and few
Since dear mamma pronounced the last adieu,
Looks to the road, and fondly thinks she hears
The carriage-wheels, and struggles with her tears :
All yet is new, the misses great and small,
Madam herself, and teachers, odious all ;
From laughter, pity, nay command, she turns,
But melts in softness, or with anger burns ;
Nauseates her food, and wonders who can sleep
On such mean beds, where she can only weep :
She scorns condolence—but to all she hates
Slowly at length her mind accommodates ;
Then looks on bondage with the same concern
As others felt, and finds that she must learn
As others learn'd—the common lot to share,
To search for comfort and submit to care.

There are, 'tis said, who on these seats attend,
And to these ductile minds destruction vend ;
Wretches, (to virtue, peace, and nature, foes)
To these soft minds, their wicked trash expose ;
Seize on the soul, ere passions take the sway,
And lead the heart, ere yet it feels, astray :
Smugglers obscene !—and can there be who take
Infernal pains, the sleeping vice to wake ?
Can there be those, by whom the thought defiled
Enters the spotless bosom of a child ?

By whom the ill is to the heart convey'd,
Who lend the foe, not yet in arms, their aid,
And sap the city-walls before the siege be laid?

Oh! rather skulking in the by-ways steal,
And rob the poorest traveller of his meal;
Burst through the humblest trader's bolted door;
Bear from the widow's hut her winter-store;
With stolen steed, on highways take your stand,
Your lips with curses arm'd, with death your hand;—
Take all but life—the virtuous more would say,
Take life itself, dear as it is, away,
Rather than guilty thus the guileless soul betray.

Years pass away—let us suppose them past,
Th' accomplish'd nymph for freedom looks at last;
All hardships over, which a school contains,
The spirit's bondage and the body's pains;
Where teachers make the heartless, trembling set
Of pupils suffer for their own regret;
Where winter's cold, attack'd by one poor fire,
Chills the fair child, commanded to retire;
She felt it keenly in the morning air,
Keenly she felt it at the evening prayer.
More pleasant summer; but then walks were made,
Not a sweet ramble, but a slow parade;
They moved by pairs beside the hawthorn-hedge,
Only to set their feelings on an edge;

And now at eve, when all their spirits rise,
Are sent to rest, and all their pleasure dies;
Where yet they all the town alert can see,
And distant plough-boys pacing o'er the lea.

These and the tasks successive masters brought—
The French they conn'd, the curious works they
wrought:

The hours they made their taper fingers strike,
Note after note, all dull to them alike;
Their drawings, dancings on appointed days,
Playing with globes, and getting parts of plays;
The tender friendships made 'twixt heart and heart,
When the dear friends had nothing to impart:—

All! all! are over;—now th'accomplish'd maid
Longs for the world, of nothing there afraid:
Dreams of delight invade her gentle breast,
And fancied lovers rob the heart of rest;
At the paternal door a carriage stands,
Love knits their hearts and Hymen joins their hands.

Ah!—world unknown! how charming is thy view,
Thy pleasures many, and each pleasure new:
Ah!—world experienced! what of thee is told?
How few thy pleasures, and those few how old!

Within a silent street, and far apart
From noise of business, from a quay or mart,
Stands an old spacious building, and the din
You hear without, explains the work within;

Unlike the whispering of the nymphs, this noise
Loudly proclaims a "boarding-school for boys:"
The master heeds it not, for thirty years
Have render'd all familiar to his ears;
He sits in comfort, 'mid the various sound
Of mingled tones for ever flowing round;
Day after day he to his task attends,—
Unvaried toil, and care that never ends:
Boys in their works proceed; while his employ
Admits no change, or changes but the boy;
Yet time has made it easy;—he beside
Has power supreme, and power is sweet to pride:
But grant him pleasure;—what can teachers feel,
Dependent helpers always at the wheel?
Their power despised, their compensation small,
Their labour dull, their life laborious all;
Set after set the lower lads to make
Fit for the class which their superiors take;
The road of learning for a time to track
In roughest state, and then again go back:
Just the same way on other troops to wait,—
Attendants fix'd at learning's lower gate.

The day-tasks now are over,—to their ground
Rush the gay crowd with joy-compelling sound;
Glad to illude the burthens of the day,
The eager parties hurry to their play:

Then in these hours of liberty we find
The native bias of the opening mind;
They yet possess not skill the mask to place,
And hide the passions glowing in the face;
Yet some are found—the close, the sly, the mean,
Who know already all must not be seen.

Lo! one who walks apart, although so young,
He lays restraint upon his eye and tongue;
Nor will he into scrapes or dangers get,
And half the school are in the stripling's debt:
Suspicious, timid, he is much afraid
Of trick and plot:—he dreads to be betray'd:
He shuns all friendship, for he finds they lend,
When lads begin to call each other friend:
Yet self with self has war; the tempting sight
Of fruit on sale provokes his appetite;—
See! how he walks the sweet seduction by;
That he is tempted, costs him first a sigh,—
'Tis dangerous to indulge, 'tis grievous to deny!
This he will choose, and whispering asks the price,
The purchase dreadful, but the portion nice;
Within the pocket he explores the pence;
Without, temptation strikes on either sense,
The sight, the smell;—but then he thinks again
Of money gone! while fruit nor taste remain.
Meantime there comes an eager thoughtless boy,
Who gives the price and only feels the joy:

Example dire! the youthful miser stops,
And slowly back the treasured coinage drops:
Heroic deed! for should he now comply,
Can he to-morrow's appetite deny?
Beside, these spendthrifts who so freely live,
Cloy'd with their purchase, will a portion give:—
Here ends debate, he buttons up his store,
And feels the comfort that it burns no more.

Unlike to him the tyrant-boy, whose sway
All hearts acknowledge; him the crowds obey:
At his command they break through every rule;
Whoever governs, he controls the school:
'Tis not the distant emperor moves their fear,
But the proud viceroy who is ever near.

Verres could do that mischief in a day,
For which not Rome, in all its power, could pay;
And these boy-tyrants will their slaves distress,
And do the wrongs no master can redress:
The mind they load with fear: it feels disdain
For its own baseness; yet it tries in vain
To shake th'admitted power;—the coward comes
again:

'Tis more than present pain these tyrants give,
Long as we've life some strong impressions live;
And these young ruffians in the soul will sow
Seeds of all vices that on weakness grow.

Hark! at his word the trembling younglings flee,
Where he is walking none must walk but he;
See! from the winter-fire the weak retreat,
His the warm corner, his the favourite seat,
Save when he yields it to some slave to keep
Awhile, then back, at his return, to creep:
At his command his poor dependents fly,
And humbly bribe him as a proud ally;
Flatter'd by all, the notice he bestows,
Is gross abuse, and bantering and blows;
Yet he's a dunce, and, spite of all his fame
Without the desk, within he feels his shame:
For there the weaker boy, who felt his scorn,
For him corrects the blunders of the morn;
And he is taught, unpleasant truth! to find
The trembling body has the prouder mind.

Hark! to that shout, that burst of empty noise,
From a rude set of bluff, obstreperous boys;
They who, like colts let loose, with vigour bound,
And thoughtless spirit, o'er the beaten ground;
Fearless they leap, and every youngster feels
His Alma active in his hands and heels.

These are the sons of farmers, and they come
With partial fondness for the joys of home;
Their minds are coursing in their fathers' fields,
And e'en the dream a lively pleasure yields;

They, much enduring, sit th'allotted hours,
And o'er a grammar waste their sprightly powers;
They dance; but them can measured steps delight,
Whom horse and hounds to daring deeds excite?
Nor could they bear to wait from meal to meal,
Did they not slyly to the chamber steal,
And there the produce of the basket seize,
The mother's gift! still studious of their ease.
Poor Alma, thus oppress'd, forbears to rise,
But rests or revels in the arms and thighs*.

“But is it sure that study will repay
“The more attentive and forbearing?”—Nay!
The farm, the ship, the humble shop have each
Gains which severest studies seldom reach.

At college place a youth, who means to raise
His state by merit and his name by praise;
Still much he hazards; there is serious strife
In the contentions of a scholar's life:
Not all the mind's attention, care, distress,
Nor diligence itself, ensure success:
His jealous heart a rival's powers may dread,
Till its strong feelings have confused his head,

* Should any of my readers find themselves at a loss in this place, I beg leave to refer them to a poem of Prior, called *Alma*, or *The Progress of the Mind*.

And, after days and months, nay, years of pain,
He finds just lost the object he would gain.

But grant him this and all such life can give,
For other prospects he begins to live;
Begins to feel that man was form'd to look
And long for other objects than a book:
In his mind's eye his house and glebe he sees,
And farms and talks with farmers at his ease;
And time is lost, till fortune sends him forth
To a rude world unconscious of his worth;
There in some petty parish to reside,
The college-boast, then turn'd the village-guide;
And though awhile his flock and dairy please,
He soon reverts to former joys and ease,
Glad when a friend shall come to break his rest,
And speak of all the pleasures they possess'd,
Of masters, fellows, tutors, all with whom
They shared those pleasures, never more to come;
Till both conceive the times by bliss endear'd,
Which once so dismal and so dull appear'd.

But fix our scholar, and suppose him crown'd
With all the glory gain'd on classic ground;
Suppose the world without a sigh resign'd,
And to his college all his care confined;
Give him all honours that such states allow,
The freshman's terror and the tradesman's bow;

Let his apartments with his taste agree,
And all his views be those he loves to see;
Let him each day behold the savoury treat,
For which he pays not, but is paid to eat;
These joys and glories soon delight no more,
Although withheld, the mind is vex'd and sore;
The honour too is to the place confined,
Abroad they know not each superior mind:
Strangers no *wrangers* in these figures see,
Nor give they worship to a high degree;
Unlike the prophet's is the scholar's case,
His honour all is in his dwelling-place:
And there such honours are familiar things;
What is a monarch in a crowd of kings?
Like other sovereigns he's by forms address'd,
By statutes govern'd and with rules oppress'd.

When all these forms and duties die away,
And the day passes like the former day,
Then of exterior things at once bereft,
He's to himself and one attendant left;
Nay, John too goes; nor aught of service more
Remains for him; he gladly quits the door,
And, as he whistles to the college-gate,
He kindly pities his poor master's fate.

Books cannot always please, however good;
Minds are not ever craving for their food;

But sleep will soon the weary soul prepare
For cares to-morrow that were this day's care:
For forms, for feasts, that sundry times have past,
And formal feasts that will for ever last.

“But then from study will no comforts rise?”—
Yes! such as studious minds alone can prize;
Comforts, yea!—joys ineffable they find,
Who seek the prouder pleasures of the mind:
The soul, collected in those happy hours,
Then makes her efforts, then enjoys her powers;
And in those seasons feels herself repaid,
For labours past and honours long delay'd.

No! 'tis not worldly gain, although by chance
The sons of learning may to wealth advance;
Nor station high, though in some favouring hour
The sons of learning may arrive at power;
Nor is it glory, though the public voice
Of honest praise will make the heart rejoice:
But 'tis the mind's own feelings give the joy,
Pleasures she gathers in her own employ—
Pleasures that gain or praise cannot bestow,
Yet can dilate and raise them when they flow.

For this the poet looks the world around,
Where form and life and reasoning man are found;
He loves the mind, in all its modes, to trace,
And all the manners of the changing race;

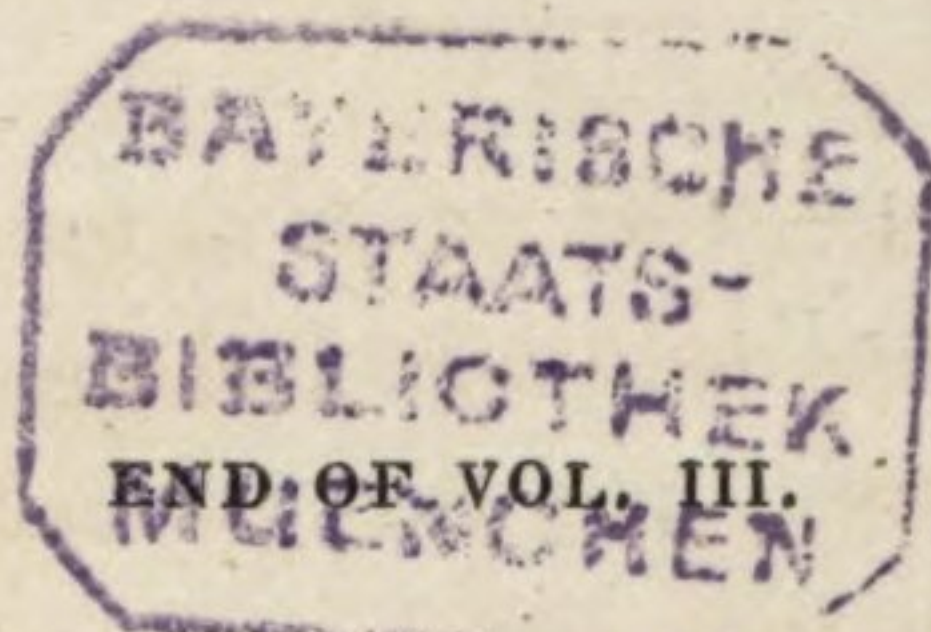
Silent he walks the road of life along,
And views the aims of its tumultuous throng:
He finds what shapes the Proteus-passions take,
And what strange waste of life and joy they make,
And loves to show them in their varied ways,
With honest blame or with unflattering praise:
'Tis good to know, 'tis pleasant to impart,
These turns and movements of the human heart:
The stronger features of the soul to paint,
And make distinct the latent and the faint;
Man as he is, to place in all men's view,
Yet none with rancour, none with scorn pursue:
Nor be it ever of my portraits told—
“Here the strong lines of malice we behold.”—

THIS let me hope, that when in public view
I bring my pictures, men may feel them true;
“This is a likeness,” may they all declare,
“And I have seen him, but I know not where:”
For I should mourn the mischief I had done,
If as the likeness all would fix on one.

Man's vice and crime I combat as I can,
But to his God and conscience leave the man;
I search (a Quixote!) all the land about,
To find its giants and enchanters out,

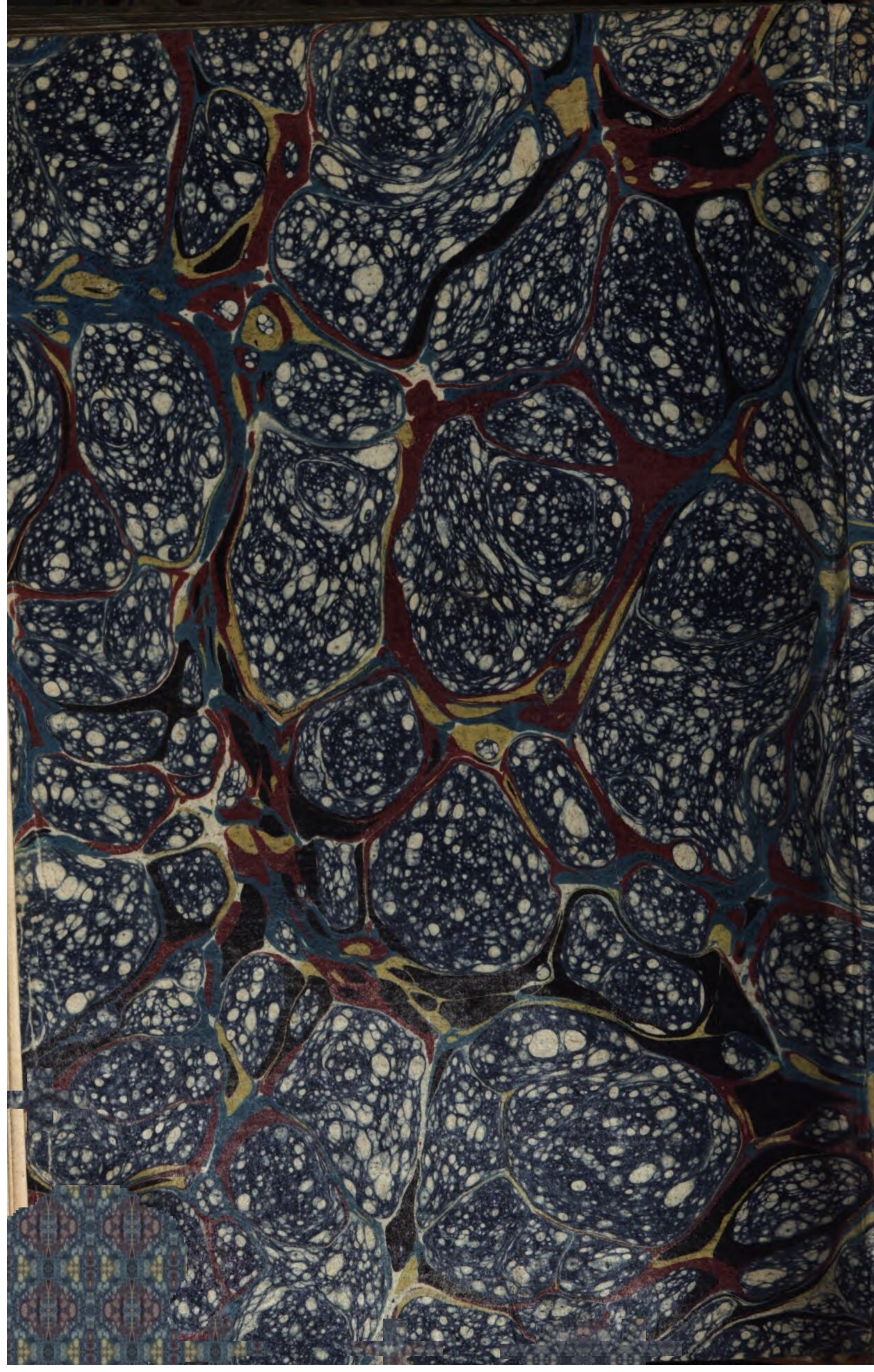
(The giant-folly, the enchanter-vice,
Whom doubtless I shall vanquish in a trice ;)
But is there man whom I would injure?—No!
I am to him a fellow, not a foe,—
A fellow-sinner, who must rather dread
The bolt, than hurl it at another's head.

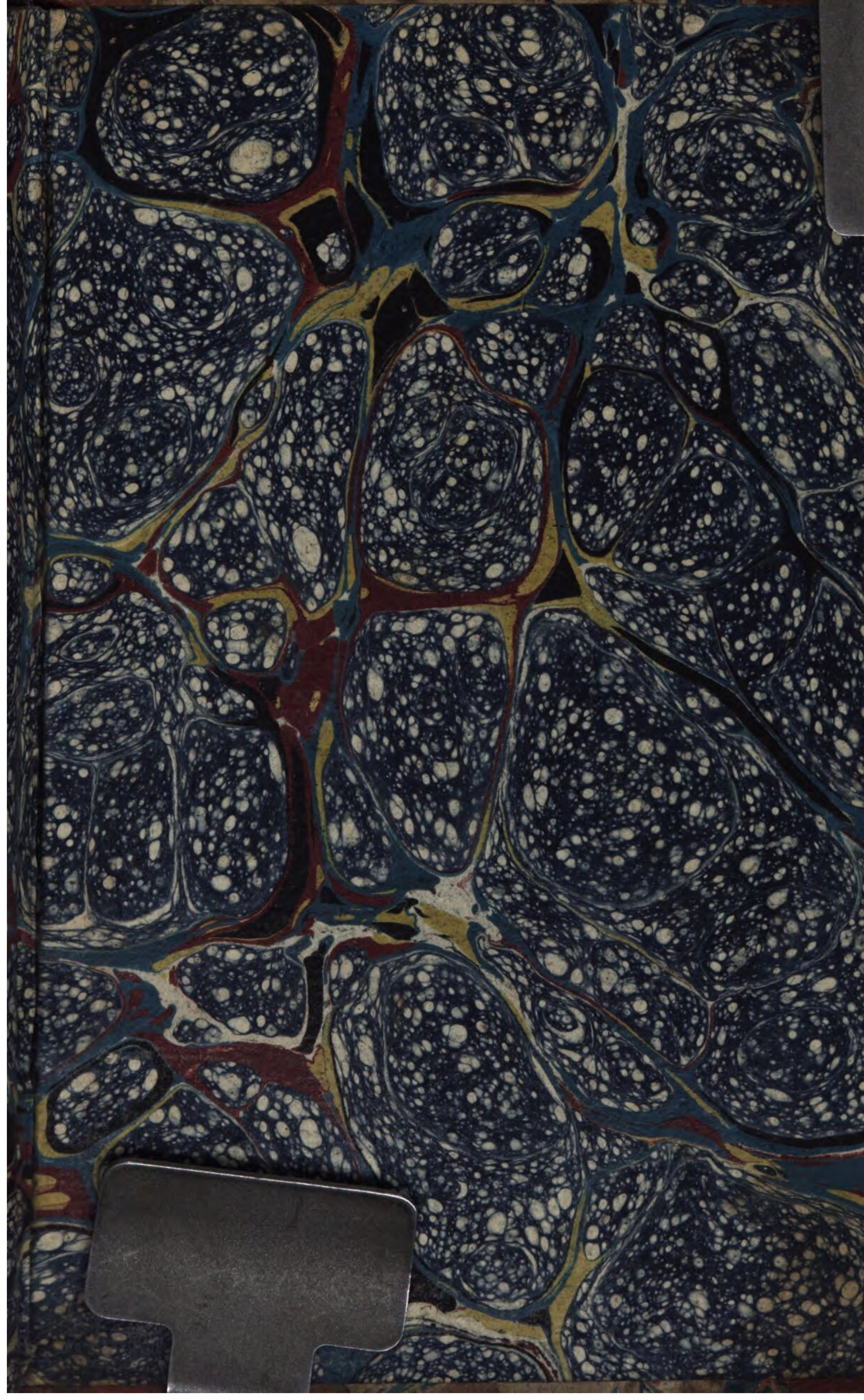
No! let the guiltless, if there such be found,
Launch forth the spear, and deal the deadly wound;
How can I so the cause of virtue aid,
Who am myself attainted and afraid?
Yet as I can, I point the powers of rhyme,
And, sparing criminals, attack the crime.

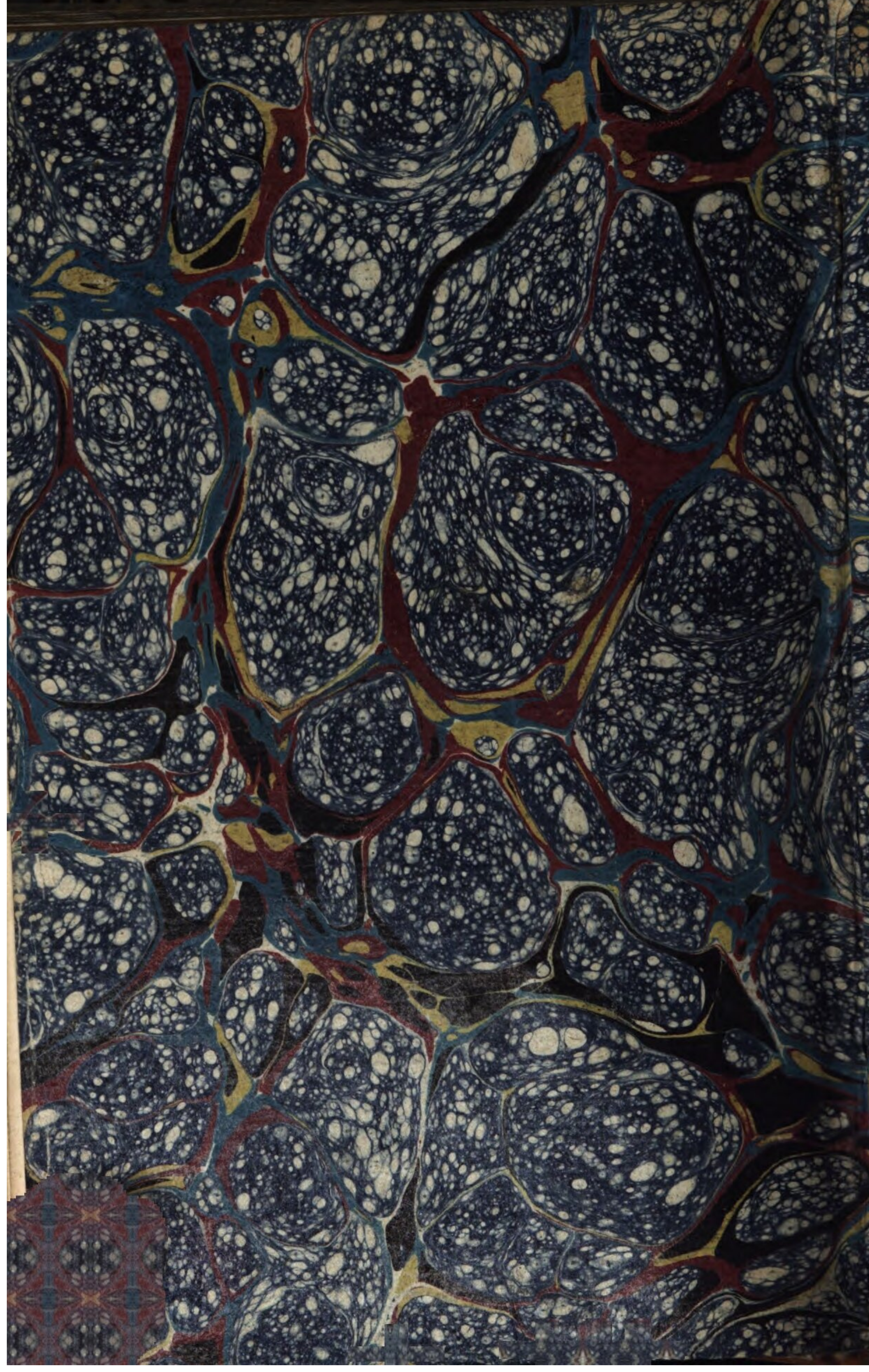


LONDON:

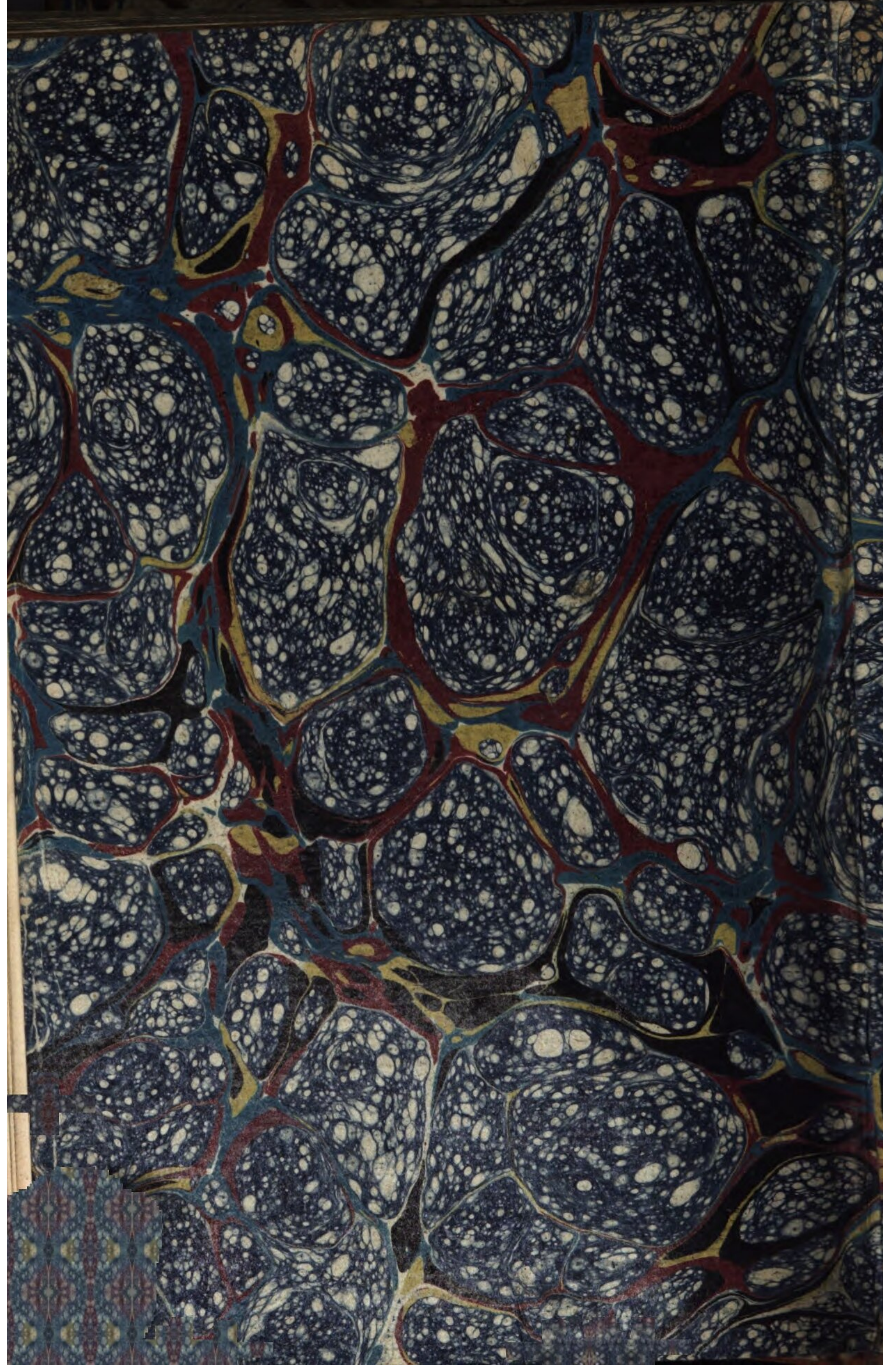
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.















Crabbe, George,

The works of the Rev. George Crabbe in eight volumes

Bd.: 3

London (1823)

P.o.angl. 84 r-3

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10745874-6